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1. Juvenile literature —
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NANCY FIRST AND LAST

BY

AMY E. BLANCHARD

AUTHOR OF "BETTY OF WYE," "GIRLS TOGETHER," ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY

WILL F. STECHER

PHILADELPHIA AND LONDON

J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY

1917

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NANCY FIRST AND LAST

CHAPTER I

A Parting of the Ways

The garden was too peaceful and fair for a scene of discord. From behind the sun-warmed box hedges came the odor of clove pinks, hundred-leaf roses and heliotrope, while breezes, passing by the porch of the old-fashioned, high-pillared house, brought the cloying sweetness of honeysuckle and jessamine blooms. Along the gravelled paths paced a man and a girl, both young and good to look upon. The girl, slender, brown-eyed, fair-haired, white-skinned, discoursed passionately; the man, with steady blue eyes, broad brow and firm chin, listened, turning toward her once in a while a half-bewildered look.

"You do not understand, you cannot," the girl was saying excitedly. "You are nothing but ice and snow, a creature of marble. If you had ever met love face to face, had ever felt its real power I would not need to question you, but it has to filter through your body and never reaches your soul. There is so little spiritual essence in what you offer that it is valueless to me."

"But, Nancy, what is it you want me to do?" asked the man, still looking bewildered.

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The girl made a despairing gesture. "You ask me to tell you what to do!" she cried. "If your own heart cannot tell you, it is no use, no use to go on. Have you ever stood at night in the shadows gazing at my window till my light went out?"

He shook his head. "I don't think so," he answered slowly.

"Did you ever lie awake, Terrence Wirt, thinking of me, and find yourself here in the garden at dawn waiting for me to appear?"

"Why, no. I didn't need to do that. I know your breakfast hour and I never like to intrude too early," replied the man still with a puzzled look. "Would you like me to come before breakfast?"

"Not unless you can't help coming."

"I hope I have myself well enough in hand not to act on an impulse which would mean impoliteness to your mother."

"It's no use, no use," Nancy repeated. "You cannot understand."

"But I do want you to be happy. It is my dearest wish to make you so. Can't you explain so I will understand wherein I fail?"

"It has been two whole days since you asked me if I loved you."

"But, dear, you told me so in the beginning. Do you want me not to believe you?"

Nancy turned away and, leaning against a tree be-

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gan to weep convulsively. Terrence tried to take her hand but she snatched it away. "Go! Go!" she cried passionately. "Do not touch me. From henceforth we are parted forever." She drew the ring from her finger and with averted face, held it out.

Silence fell between them. The gentle rustle of leaves overhead, the drone of a bee making ready to clasp a flower, the opening and shutting of a door in the house, these were the only sounds audible. Presently Nancy felt the touch of fingers; the ring was withdrawn from her palm. In another moment she heard footsteps treading the gravel, the gate clicked and she knew she was alone. She stood for a moment leaning against the tree, then she dashed to the house, pushed open the outer door, darted up to her room and flung herself, face downward on the bed, where she sobbed her heart out, refusing her midday meal and asking to be left alone. The sun was low in the skies when, pale and still, she went slowly down stairs. Mrs. Loomis, who was sitting in the broad hall which opened east and west upon porticos, looked up as Nancy paused upon the lowest step before coming forward, but she made no remark. Nancy sat down on the carved bench opposite Mrs. Loomis's high-backed chair. She spread wide her arms and rested a hand on either arm of the bench, fixing her burning eyes upon space. She might have been posing for some figure of Tragedy.

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"Is your headache better, daughter?" asked Mrs. Loomis, drawing a needle from the row of knitting she had just finished. She was a frail looking woman with fast-graying hair, a low voice and a quiet manner.

Nancy's great dark eyes rested somberly upon the questioner. "I didn't have a headache. I have parted forever from Terrence Wirt, and my heart is broken," she replied in an intense tone.

"Why, Nancy!" Mrs. Loomis laid down her knitting. "What in the world did you quarrel about?"

"We didn't quarrel. He doesn't love me. At least his love is of such poor quality that it might better be called a mild liking. Compared to mine it is as lukewarm as milk is to wine."

"Lukewarm milk is very nourishing and often to be greatly preferred to wine," remarked Mrs. Loomis with a little smile as she resumed her knitting. "You are too exacting, Nancy."

"I want no more than has been given to other women. I want only what Romeo gave to Juliet, what Dante gave to Beatrice."

"But Terrence is not a poet, my dear," Mrs. Loomis counted her stitches, "though he appears to me to be very true and steadfast. He may not be exactly what you might consider temperamental, but certainly he is appreciative and devoted to you; moreover, he is a young man of fine character, and that is worth everything. I am sure he loves you deeply."

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"No, no," Nancy sprang to her feet and waved away the suggestion with a dramatic gesture, then she seated herself at her mother's feet on the doorsill, resting her chin in her hands. "No man who was devoted to a girl could be content with such a humdrum, settled state of affairs. No romance, no poetry, no jealousy, no wild heart yearnings, no sleepless nights. All these have been mine. I loved him so, Oh, I loved him so." Her lips trembled and she turned to bury her face in her mother's lap.

Mrs. Loomis stroked her hair softly. "Well, my dear, if you love him so much as all that I cannot imagine why you sent him away. Perhaps when you see him again it will all come right, since he seems to have had no fault to find with you."

"We shall not meet again. He took me at my word. He may have no fault to find, but he does not love me or he would not have gone," persisted Nancy, lifting wet eyes.

"He loves you in a very quiet, manly way, no doubt, but that is not saying that it is not a very strong and enduring love which is much better than a wild passion. However, if it does not satisfy you there is nothing more to say. You have dismissed him, which I consider a mistake, and there is nothing left for him but to accept your decree."

"But I don't want him to," cried Nancy. "Why didn't he get down on his knees and beg me not to give

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him up? Why didn't he tell me that I had broken his heart, that I had clouded his life, that existence would be unbearable to him without me? I expected him to. I thought the test would bring forth at least some anguished protest."

"What did he say?"

"He didn't say a word, not a word. He just took the ring when I gave it to him and walked away." Nancy gave a little choking sob.

"Still waters run deep; shallow streams make the most noise," remarked Mrs. Loomis.

"Do you think I am a shallow stream because I cry out in my pain?"

"No, dear, but you are a highly emotional child, and demand more of life than you are liable to receive."

"I flew to the very heights of love; he was content to grope below the stars."

"Oh, you child, you child, you are so young, and you do love to talk like a tragedy queen. When real trouble comes you will lose all those romantic ideas, and will not look to have a man express his deepest emotions in poetry. Real trouble will come soon enough; it is our portion in this life, and you must learn not to dwell in the clouds, but to gain a more practical outlook."

"And while I am learning I shall be very, very unhappy."

"Perhaps so; I am afraid so. Unhappiness comes

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to each one in some form or other, but we need not magnify it, dwell on it, nurse it, hug it to our breasts. We need not be selfish about it and imagine our griefs greater than those of any other. We must rise above them and try to help those whose sorrows are greater than ours."

Nancy gave a deep sigh. At that moment she did not think any sorrow could be greater than her present one. She was emotional, enthusiastic, with an eager belief that life must hold for her all that her ardent nature could demand. Unhappiness had been given no place in her dreams heretofore and she was not armed to meet it. She had planned out an interview with her lover, an interview which she believed would terminate exactly as she fancied it would. She had wanted to make this a supreme test and she was aghast that it had resulted so disastrously. Bubbling over with joy, full of appreciation, of fresh and pretty fancies, with a keen sense of humor, yet thrilled by more serious things, it is no wonder that Terrence Wirt found her charming. Her beauty, versatility of mind and her enthusiasm were liable to impress a more mature and more exacting man. That he had been the first to become her suitor was due to chance, Fate, Nancy called it, and the romantic manner of their meeting had much to do with the rapidity with which she fell in love. Probably her heart was standing tiptoe waiting for the possible prince, and any who bore the

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slightest semblance to a knightly figure would have been welcomed. As it was, when the girth of her saddle broke, she was dumped upon a country road and a good-looking young man suddenly galloped up, dismounted and insisted upon leading his and her own horse to her home, in her eyes he appeared as truly a Paladin as if he had worn shining armor and had carried a shield. Straightway he filled her dreams day and night. She did not fall in love; she flung herself in.

Mrs. Loomis, at first amused, was next bewildered, then concerned at discovering that a perfect stranger had so completely carried Nancy off her feet. But when she learned that the young man was the guest of a sister who had lately married into one of the old families of the neighborhood, that his parents were people of standing in the city, that he was just graduated from college and bore a record above reproach,—*"sans peur, sans reproche,"* as Nancy loved to say,—she made no objection to the engagement.

Indeed, Mrs. Loomis was not a born objector. The line of least resistance was usually hers, partly no doubt because of physical weakness. Ira and Parthenia, commonly known as Unc' Iry and Aunt Parthy, relieved her of most of her household cares. She occupied the ancestral home of the Loomises, which she was able to keep up by means of an income inherited from her husband. Her business matters were

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looked after by the old lawyer who had managed Loomis affairs since the day that he took his father's place in the dingy office on the main street of the county town.

As for Nancy, she had grown up pretty much as she pleased, had been under the care of governesses good, bad or indifferent, had read, not wisely but too well, whatever came her way, had been away at school for two years, coming home always for week-ends and between whiles, too, if she felt so disposed, but in one way or another absorbing a deal of information of a desultory sort. Languages she found easy and a French governess had trained her into a sufficient knowledge of her tongue to enable her to speak it rather fluently. Music was her chief talent. She played readily by ear, but hated to be bound down by technical exercises, and in her earlier years was not compelled to do so, since Mrs. Loomis did not insist. However, the old German professor at school scared her into a carefulness she had previously scorned, and at last she came to be his star pupil, continuing her lessons after she had left school. As for her schoolmates, most of them lived too far away for her to visit after her school days were over, and though she kept up a desultory correspondence with one or two she was not intimate with any special one. One or two holiday visits to New York had given her some idea of life in the metropolis, but the days spent in a big hotel did not

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specially charm her, and, while they dispelled some of her illusions, they did not interfere with her day dreams. Back again in her country home she was ready to enter again her world of romance and dream away the hours.

On this special evening she sat on the doorsill, silently brooding and looking off into the garden which so lately had been a paradise to her. It was impossible, she told herself, that she would never again pace the walk with Terrence by her side. She would go half way, yes, she was willing to do even more at the slightest sign from him. They could not avoid meeting; perhaps it would be at church, when she would find herself smiling wistfully across the aisle at him. He would be assured then that she was not angry with him; he would join her on the way out and ask if they could not be at least friends. She would accord him the privilege and after a while they would drift back into their old relation. Or it might be that they would meet at the house of some acquaintance. She would be making a call, would be waiting for her friend to appear. Suddenly Terrence would come in. "You!" he would exclaim agitatedly. She would hold out her hand and look up into his face beseechingly. "Let us be friends," she would say. Oh, she could not be content to accept the fact that they were parted forever!

Her musings were interrupted by the gray-haired

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old butler who came softly into the hall. "Miss Jenny, ma'am," he said, "Parthy say ef de ladies ready suppah is."

Mrs. Loomis drew Nancy close to her as they went out together into the lofty dining-room where pale shifting lights were playing over the wall and touching up the old mahogany and silver as the western sky received its last benefice from the sun.

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CHAPTER II

A Revelation

It was but a few days later that Nancy came in with the local paper and, with pale cheeks, pointed tragically to an item which read: "As a fitting conclusion to his studies at college, Mr. Terrence Wirt, lately visited his sister, Mrs. Lindsay, at Heathworth, will travel abroad. He sails from New York to-morrow on the *St. Paul.*"

"He has gone!" quavered Nancy. "Gone without a word!"

Mrs. Loomis laid down the paper with a troubled look, but presently her habit of taking the easiest way out, asserted itself. "Oh, well, Nancy," she said, "I wouldn't take it to heart. There are as good fish in the sea as ever yet were caught. You are very young and there are plenty of nice young men in the world."

"Not for me," responded Nancy, gloomily.

"Of course you think so now; that is perfectly natural. Every girl feels so at first, till some one else comes along. Of course I haven't a word against Terrence, and his people are all right, but for my own part I'd much rather see you settled in this neighborhood, than to see you married to some one who would take you away off to New York or some other big city. There are a number of nice boys whose families have

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lived here for generations; there's Patterson Lippett, for instance."

"Pat Lippett!" exclaimed Nancy with fine disdain. "He is no more to be compared to Terrence than an earth worm is to a jewelled humming-bird; besides, I have known him all my life."

"I don't see why that isn't so much the better. I am sure Pat has been to college, and so have several of the other boys you know. The Lippetts are a good old family, so are the Carters and the Gordons. Don't look so tragic, dear. I declare when those big eyes of yours get that expression you fairly frighten me. Why I had had half a dozen affairs before I met Mr. Loomis and I am sure no one could have been happier than we were. There is no more beautiful memory to me than our honeymoon in Cuba and Mexico. Everyone has said they never knew anything more romantic." She sighed a little.

"That is why you love Spanish, isn't it mamma?" said Nancy. "I wish I had studied it."

"It is not too late now," returned Mrs. Loomis. "I could help you. Why don't you take it up this summer, Nancy? It would occupy your time and perhaps take your mind away from this affair."

"It might help," returned Nancy, in a melancholy tone, "but nothing could make me forget."

"Not at once, of course, but you might gain quite

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a good knowledge in a year's time and then we might make a visit to Cuba."

This prospect appealed to Nancy, and she showed enough interest in the proposition to say: "Mademoiselle said I had a gift for languages."

"Naturally," responded Mrs. Loomis, with a thoughtful look.

"Do you think that I inherited the gift from you or from my father?"

Mrs. Loomis started. "From your father," she said, and immediately changed the subject.

Nancy took the paper she had brought in, meaning to preserve the notice of Terrence Wirt's departure. So did she mean to preserve any word of him. She found an ancient vellum-bound album in a pile of books packed away in the attic, appropriated it and dedicated it to her lost lover with a queer ceremony of her own invention, in which a dead rose, broken heart and a dying candle figured. No consolatory words of Mrs. Loomis's availed to change her conviction that the separation was final, and for the first time in her life she turned a shrinking front toward the future.

The summer days dragged on monotonously. The gallants who rode that way rode off again, for Nancy would have none of their invitations to picnics, dances or tournaments. She always had a flimsy excuse: she was tired; she didn't care for picnics; she was busy; her mother might need her, and so the offended young

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squires finally turned their attentions to more complaisant maidens. The Loomis homestead stood a couple of miles out of the small town, upon an unfrequented road, so that visitors were rather rare, even at best, and it might be said that they were not encouraged, if one judged by the infrequency of Mrs. Loomis's calls upon her neighbors. She was naturally indolent, and in the past few years had been warned by her doctor not to exert herself unnecessarily, so she was quite content to sit on the porch with a book or with fancy work, while Nancy wandered about at will, or spent her time poring over some old volume of poetry. Many of the more prosperous neighbors, the Lindsays among them, had gone to the Springs to enjoy greater gayeties, so there were few young persons left, and these Nancy declared she did not miss.

It grew hotter and hotter. Nancy's pallor increased day by day, and at last Mrs. Loomis noticed it and looked at the girl with concern.

"I wish I felt able to make the journey to the North," she said. "This excessive heat is pulling us both down. I feel as limp as a rag and you look as if you had been drawn through a knot-hole. I hope you haven't been poring over those Spanish books too steadily. Perhaps we'd better stop the lessons till it grows cooler. Would you like to join the Lippetts at Greenbriar, Nancy?" she inquired with a half hope of bringing Nancy into the daily society of Patterson.

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"I shouldn't care a rap about it," returned Nancy, quickly nipping the hope in the bud. "I would much rather stay alone with you than be thrust into a little hot room and have to dress half a dozen times a day, and for what purpose?" she added sighing.

Mrs. Loomis laid her cheek against the girl's slim hand. "After all," she said, "I suppose one is more comfortable at home, and I must confess I feel like undertaking anything but a journey, myself. Any exertion makes me feel as if I should collapse utterly."

Nancy bent to kiss her. "Perhaps you need a tonic. Shall I call up Dr. Turner and ask him to stop in?"

Mrs. Loomis shook her head. "No, it isn't worth while. I know exactly what he would say. It is the same old trouble. He wouldn't give me anything new. I am out of the drops he ordered the last time, but I will send for them to-morrow."

"Mañana; that old mañana," returned Nancy, playfully. "Why not send at once?"

"One more day will not make any difference," protested Mrs. Loomis. "Iry is busy cutting the grass and I don't want to take him away from his work."

"I could go."

"In this heat? No, indeed. I should be afraid of sunstroke, and should be so worried every minute you were gone that it would do me twice the harm it would to wait."

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So Nancy yielded, but told herself that she would take an early morning ride into the town and bring out the medicine before breakfast the next morning.

But the dawning of the morning was not on this earth for Virginia Loomis, for, while the world was yet in half light, old Parthy came to Nancy's door, tears rolling down her dark cheeks. "De white hoss done been hyar, honey," she said. "I been a-lookin' fo' him. Udder day a li'l buhd fly into Miss Jinny's room, an' a dawg been howlin' uvver night fo' a week."

Nancy, sitting up in bed, gazed at the woman with startled eyes. "What? Who?" she began, but could not go on, feeling the weight of some tragedy imminent.

"Las' night 'pears lak Miss Jinny skeerce kin drag huhse'f up stairs," Parthy went on, "an' dis mawnin' airly when de roosters a-crowin', three o'clock, I reckons, I jes' kaint sleep, an' wakes up Iry an' says ef dat dawg don' stop dat howlin' I los' my min', an' Iry gits up, too, fo' I feels sumpin bleedged mek me go up an' see ef Miss Jinny want nothin' I dunno de whys an' wharfores of dat but I feels lak I bleedged ter go." She paused and Nancy, never moving, kept her eyes fixed in the same startled gaze.

"Go on," she whispered. Faint light was creeping into the room. A gentle breeze drifted in through the open windows, swaying the curtains ever so gently. There were one or two twittering cheeps from newly

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awakened birds. A wagon rattled clumsily along the stony road. "Go on," again whispered Nancy.

"I goes up an' knocks at Miss Jinny's do', but she ain' give no 'sponse, den I opens de do' an' goes in, an'—an'" Parthy broke off short in her speech and, burying her face in her apron, she rocked back and forth moaning.

Nancy slipped out of bed and crept toward her. "If mamma is ill, send for the doctor at once," she said, in a strained voice.

"Iry done been, but 'tain' no use, 'tain' no use. Po' li'l chile. Po' li'l chile," she wailed.

Nancy darted from the room to be met at her mother's door by the old doctor. "Go back, my child," he said, tenderly. "Go back, you can be of no use now. She is safe."

"Safe fo' evahmo'," chanted Parthy, who had followed Nancy. "She happy an' safe. She done gone to meet Mars Jeems."

With one wild cry Nancy flung herself upon Parthy's broad breast, was picked up in her strong arms and carried back to her room.

The days that followed passed for Nancy she scarce knew how. Kind neighbors tried to comfort her; the good old doctor spared no pains to ease her grief, telling her that if her mother had lived she would have suffered greatly. "It was her heart, my child," the

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doctor said, " and it is a merciful Providence who has allowed her to leave this world so peacefully."

But Nancy would not be comforted. She felt that Heaven had dealt her a double blow, that in her cup of bitterness had been mixed still more bitter draughts till it overflowed.

It was not till the lean old lawyer, Silvanus Weed, came to consult her about her mother's affairs that Nancy realized that she must rouse herself and make an effort to understand what he was trying to say.

She met him in the library, a room seldom used, for Mrs. Loomis had always preferred her own more cheerful sitting-room upstairs. On this occasion Nancy felt that its memories were too tender, its associations too dear to be desecrated by discussions such as she knew must take place, so to the sombre library she went and established herself in a stiff chair facing the table. She looked very wan, very young and helpless, and Mr. Weed felt that seldom had a more difficult duty been assigned to him.

He cleared his throat once or twice after he sat down and turned over the papers he drew from his bag, then he said suddenly, " You know, Miss Nancy, Mrs. Loomis had only a life interest in this estate in the event of her dying without issue. Should such be the case the estate would revert to the Loomis heirs, nieces and nephews of the late Mr. James Loomis. Beyond this in her own right she had not a large in-

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come. This, of course, is left by will to you. I cannot state the exact sum at this moment, as there are some stocks which I have not looked into; they might realize you more if well handled."

"But,— but,—" Nancy roused herself to say, "as I am the only child, surely I inherit all. You meant that it—the place—my father's property, would go to his family only in case there were no children, wasn't that what you meant, Mr. Weed?" She fixed her great, mournful eyes upon his face and his own gaze fell.

"I meant," he said hesitatingly, "that if there were no legal heirs, all Mr. Loomis's property would go to his family. Yes, that is what I meant." He fidgeted with the papers on the table and seemed unable to go on although Nancy waited expectantly.

"I wished to say," he spoke again after what seemed an unnecessarily long pause, "that Mrs. Weed, at least we both would feel gratified if you would come to us until all these legal matters are settled. You will scarcely wish to remain alone with servants, and we would be much gratified to receive you under our roof till your plans are made."

"But, Oh, Mr. Weed, I would so much rather stay right here. It would break my heart to go away so soon. I could get some one, some nice, quiet, respectable person to stay with me, couldn't I?"

"No doubt, no doubt," Mr. Weed answered nervously. "I think perhaps," he added, "that the next

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thing to be done is to go over such papers of Mrs. Loomis's as have not been entrusted to me. There may be matters which need legal attention, and we would best see to such as soon as possible. You have the keys, of course."

"Yes. At least I know where they are," Nancy replied in a disheartened voice. Why all this red tape, this caution when it seemed a very simple thing that she be allowed to retain what was hers, her inheritance by right of descent? "I suppose there has to be something done about a will," she said, "it has to be—probated, do they call it? Does it take long?"

"Not so very, and an estate is usually settled up within the year."

"Oh, a year, then I need not hurry."

The lawyer gave his dry little cough as he began to gather up his papers. He had an angular face, square forehead, blocked in nose, and eyes which seemed like two triangles set beneath indefinite brows, but his smile was kindly as he said: "Now, don't worry, Miss Nancy. There will probably be no objection to your staying here as long as you wish, though I wish to impress it upon you that our home is open to you at any time that you may feel you would be ready to come to it."

"I do appreciate your saying so," returned Nancy earnestly, "but you can understand that my own home must seem more of a refuge than any other place just

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now. It is all so dear to me, hallowed by so many precious memories. Parthy and Ira will take good care of me."

"I am sure of that," Mr. Weed replied in his stiff little manner. "So then, Miss Nancy, we will leave the question open for the present and in the meantime you can be looking over the papers. You can let me know when you wish to consult me about them and I will advise you to the best of my ability. I trust you will believe that I wish to spare you all the trouble that I can, and that I will serve you as faithfully as I would any of the family. We Weeds have attended to the Loomis's legal matters for generations and I think we have never failed them yet. Now, no matter what happens, you must not worry." He gave her shoulder a wooden sort of pat and went out, leaving the girl to ponder over what he had said, but, as he walked down the gravelled path he murmured to himself. "I could not do it. Not yet, not yet. Let her find it out for herself."

"Better get it over with," sighed Nancy, as she watched the lawyer's stiff figure mount his buggy. "Ah, me, I wish mamma's sisters had not died young. I wish I had a real live aunt or an older sister to help me through all this terrible business. I must be brave," she told herself. "I have to be," she repeated as she searched for the keys. In time she found them and sat down before the old escritoire which was a familiar

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object in Mrs. Loomis's sitting-room." I cannot, oh, I cannot," she whispered chokingly as she began to draw out papers from the various pigeon-holes. The papers were thrust rather loosely into the most convenient spot, or, unlabeled, were scattered about in a drawer. Most of these she was able to sort without difficulty. A packet of letters, tied with a black ribbon was marked " From my dear husband." These Nancy put aside reverently, then removed a smaller packet which had lain beneath them. There was nothing to indicate the correspondent, but some were post-marked Havana, some New Orleans. There were not more than half a dozen and, because they were so few, Nancy decided to read them.

As her eyes followed the lines of the first letter her breath was drawn in sharply. She hastily glanced at the signature, José Beltrán. This letter she flung aside and eagerly glanced through the remaining ones. At last she started to her feet with a wild cry, staggered to the door, still grasping the letter, and found her way gropingly to her own room. " Not that! Not that!" she moaned, and sank in a heap on the floor.

There Parthy found her. " Po' little lamb! Po li'l lamb," she murmured as she lifted her in her arms and laid her on the bed. " De good Lord done stricken huh fo' sho. He done lay his han' heavy on huh." She loosened the girl's clothing, then sent a call below for Iry. " Miss Nancy done give out at las'," she said. " You bleedged to fetch de doctah, Iry. She done come to de een' o' huh rope."

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CHAPTER III

Creeping Back

For days Nancy lay babbling in delirium, her head, shorn of its golden locks, tossing from side to side. When he was first called in, Dr. Plummer shook his head dubiously. "Who is with you here, Aunt Parthy?" he asked.

"'Tain't nobody, doctah, jes' at de present 'ceptin' Iry. Miss Ober she been an' stay a while, an' Miss Greenway she stay a while, dat jes' at fust, when Miss Nancy lef' by huhse'f. Den she up an' say she don' want nobody but jes' Iry an' me; she don' want no strangers meddlin' wif her ma's things. She don' say dat to dem, min' yuh, but she say so to me, an she jes' sweet an' perlite to 'em but she let 'em all know she radder be lef' alone."

"She must have a trained nurse at once," decided the doctor.

"I kin nuss huh," declared Parthy, looking anxiously from the bed to the doctor. "Dese yer train' nusses a lot o' trouble, dey tells me. Dey say yuh bleedged wait on 'em han' an' foot, an' dey so high an' mighty yuh kaint please 'em nohow. Dat what dey tells me. I kin nuss huh."

"No, Aunt Parthy, I'm afraid you can't," decided the doctor.

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"What de reason I kaint?" persisted Parthy. "Ain't I nuss huh when she have de measles an' de whookin' cough, an de chicken pox? Ain't I? What Miss Jinny know 'bout nussin'. Law, doctah, I teks ker o' Miss Jinny an' Miss Nancy bofe."

"I know that Parthy, and you did well, but this is quite a different case and will require a skilful hand. I know you would do your best, and we shall probably have to call on you to help out, but this child has every symptom of brain fever. This ordeal has been too much for her."

"Ain't it de troof now?" exclaimed Parthy. "I say she boun' be sick ef she don' look out. Why, doctah, she ain't been eatin' nuff ter keep a buhd alive, dis month pas', an' den de heat an' all huh trouble comin' so sudden. Co'se huh brain giv out when she ain't feed it up."

Even the gravity of the situation did not prevent a little smile from lurking around the doctor's lips at this speech. "Well, Parthy," he said, "a trained nurse is an absolute necessity. I think I know just the right person, and I can promise you she will give no more trouble than is required. In the meantime I want you to carry out these instructions"—he gave them to her—"and then I will go back and return as soon as I can with Mrs. Bertram, the nurse I spoke of. With her help and the Lord's I hope we can pull her through.

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Poor little thing! Poor little thing!" So he left Nancy to Aunt Parthy's tender mercies.

Thus it was when at last Nancy opened her eyes to an actual world, instead of the weird, and often terrible one, in which she had been for so long, she beheld a strange, but kind and sympathetic face bent above her. She gazed long and earnestly before she whispered faintly "Mamma!"

The nurse stroked the frail little hand which lay outside the coverlet, but said nothing though her eyes were full of tenderness.

"Who are you?" Nancy added faintly. "I want mamma."

"I am your nurse, Mrs. Bertram," was the answer. "Don't try to talk, dear. You have been very ill and must keep quiet."

Nancy, too weak to do else, closed her eyes, but gradually the recollection of all that had happened returned to her, and tears began to trickle from beneath her closed eyelids. But presently she heard a soft voice ask: "She in her conscience yet, Mis' Bertry?" and opening her eyes again she beheld Aunt Parthy standing by her bedside and looking down upon her with loving concern. Nancy tried to lift a feeble hand, murmuring "Oh, Mammy, Oh, Mammy," and the tears flowed faster.

"Dere, honey chile, dere now," said Parthy, soothingly, taking the slim white hand in her strong black

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one. "Yo' ole Mammy gwine stay right hyar whar yuh kin see huh ole black face. Don' yuh mou'n fo' yo' ma, chile; she wid de angels a-lookin' down at yuh dis blessed minute. She gone whar dey ain' no mo' weepin' an' sighin' er no mo' sickness er dyin'. Jes yuh think o' dat. Hyah come de doctah. I say he be mighty glad yuh come back outen dem shadders whar yuh been stayin'."

Dr. Plummer came near and smiled down benevolently upon his patient. "Well, little one," he said, "you're better. Now we shall have you up in no time."

"Why, why did you let me come back?" whispered Nancy. "They are all gone, all gone, and no one wants me."

The doctor turned away and furtively wiped his glasses with what might seem unnecessary fierceness. "Tut! Tut!" he exclaimed as he again addressed his patient. "We're not all gone, not a bit of it. You've more friends in this place than you can count, beginning with myself and Mrs. Bertram, not to mention Aunt Parthy. You'll be coming on finely now. I expect you to be laughing at my stale old jokes before the week is out."

Before the week was out she was not exactly laughing, but she was ready to admit that life still held hopes for her, that the world offered her beauty, that Heaven had given her friends. The presence of her

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nurse was a great comfort, and she began to give her a devotion born of helplessness and dependence. But even the doctor's jokes, Parthy's pleasantries, or the tender, encouraging words of her calm and capable nurse failed to alter the sad expression of her face or the sombre look of her eyes, now all the larger because of the thinness of her face.

"Laws, chile," said Aunt Parthy one morning when she was anxiously watching her nursling's attempts at eating breakfast, "I 'clar dem eyes o' you'n teks up nigh de whole o' yo' purty li'l face. Kaint yuh eat no mo' dan dat? Yuh 'min's me o' one dese yer li'l yaller chicks, picky, picky, picky. Ain' dey nothin' yuh relishes? Ef dey anythin' yuh laks Iry go right down town an' git it fo' yuh ef he have to comb de town wif a fine toof comb ter git it. How yuh relishes a nice li'l weenty piece o' duck er a slice o' young tu'key?"

Nancy shook her head. "I couldn't eat anything more, Mammy dear," she said, "but I should like to see Mr. Weed. I think I am strong enough now."

"Dat ole atomy? Honey, he so dry in de j'ints I don' know ef he kin git hyar 'thout crackin', but Iry kin go fo' him ef yuh says so. He ole atomy, dat man is. Ain't got no juice lef' in him. He 'minds me o' one o' dese yer places in de woods whar dey ain' nothin' growin', nothin' on de groun' but jes' pine needles. But yo' ma she trusses him, an' all de Loomises trus'

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him so I reckons we bleedged trus' him, but he dat dry he mos' choke yuh when yuh talks ter him."

Nancy smiled faintly. Nothing brought a smile to her lips more surely than Aunt Parthy's rambling comments. She was sitting in a big chair by the window of Mrs. Loomis's favorite room when Mr. Weed arrived. Between the branches of the great trees she could see a far stretch of country, the little town at the foot of the hills, and the railway trains crossing a shining river and winding along in the distance. She could also see the nearer view of the box-edged garden borders and the gravelled path along which Mr. Weed was moving stiffly. She smiled as she remembered Parthy's criticism, for his movements did suggest that he might creak as he walked, but the smile faded away as she remembered why she had sent for him, and she drew a deep sigh. She sat motionless when he entered the room. She must brace herself for this ordeal. She scarce paid attention to his inquiries after her health, his felicitations upon her recovery, but cut these short by saying: "Please sit down, Mr. Weed. I have something important to say to you," and she did not wait a moment before making the announcement. "This place is not mine, and I want you to tell me what I must do. Did you know, Mr. Weed? Did you know?"

Mr. Weed regarded the floor for a moment before he answered, "Yes, I knew."

Nancy drew a quick breath of relief and said with

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a sad little half smile. "Then it would have been of no use if I had tried to keep it to myself. I was tempted to at first, but I couldn't be so dishonorable, of course. I think it was more because I hated to give up the name than anything else."

Mr. Weed nodded. "I can believe that," he said. "It would have been unnatural if you had not been tempted at first."

"But why, Mr. Weed, why was I not told in the first place? It would have been so much easier for me if I had grown up with a knowledge of the truth. But to come now, now, on top of everything else, I feel as if I could not bear it." She gave a quick sob, but steadied herself at once and said in a controlled voice, "Please tell me what you know and why you didn't tell me."

The lawyer gave his sudden dry cough. "I couldn't, Miss Nancy, I suppose it was cowardly, but I simply couldn't bring myself to the task of hurting you. I told myself that it would be better for you to make the discovery yourself, and that is why I suggested that you examine Mrs. Loomis's papers. You found them, I conclude."

"Yes, I found them, papers, letters which told me——"

"Letters from your—from José Beltrán?"

"Yes. You have seen them?"

"I saw them a long time ago, when Mrs. Loomis

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first came to this place after her husband's death."

"And she brought me with her. Why did she conceal the fact that I was not her own child?"

"Because she meant to adopt you legally in place of the child she had lost, to give you a legal right to the name she bore. She always meant to do that, but, like many, many others, she deferred it from time to time. She had a feeling that if it were known by her husband's family you might not be treated with proper deference, and she was jealous for you. She hoped to live to see you well married, then the name would have made little difference. It was a wrong view which she took, but it came more from a natural disinclination to trouble herself about business than from any desire to harm you. I was able to persuade her to make a will in which she left you all that was her own."

Nancy was silent before she asked: "Would I have had more if I had been legally adopted?"

"Possibly; but we need not go into that now. The will was made long ago."

"Poor, dear mamma," sighed Nancy. "At first, Mr. Weed, I felt very bitterly toward her, as if she had done me a great wrong. I was very wicked to feel so, for I know she thought she was doing her best, and I have come to see that my feeling should be one of deep gratitude rather than of bitterness. She did so much for me, me, a poor little waif but it is a shock to know that my name is Anita Beltrán and not Nancy

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Loomis, to know little of my father and nothing of my own mother. Do you know anything more about me than is contained in those letters?"

"Nothing. I know only that you were deserted by your own mother; that your father, in political difficulties, was obliged to leave Mexico, that he went first to Cuba and then to New Orleans, where he died of fever; that Mrs. Loomis took you, at the time of your father's flight, brought you back with her from Mexico and reared you as her own."

"And her own child?"

"Was born in Mexico, lived but a short time and died there. Mr. Loomis died while they were on their way home, and she came here a widow with one child whom all believed to be her own. I think I was the only person who was informed of the truth, and this because of necessity rather than choice. Mrs. Loomis was still rather a young woman, and it seemed possible that she might live for many years. I was not aware that she had serious heart trouble till I learned so from Dr. Plummer after her death."

"I never knew it, either. I knew she was not very strong, but that there could be anything serious the matter never occurred to me. If I had known"—she gave a little sob— "it might have been different. I would have been more careful of her, more attentive."

"Ah, my dear, do not reproach yourself. You did not know and therefore acted according to your lack

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of knowledge. I can appreciate your feeling, for it has been my own in this case."

"It is good of you to say so," returned Nancy gratefully. "Most of what you have been telling me, Mr. Weed, I gathered from those letters. I shall keep them sacredly, all I have, all I shall ever have, probably, of my own people. Now, will you please tell me what you think I should do? I cannot live here under obligations to strangers upon whom I have no claim. Will I have enough to live upon?"

"I would not worry about that yet. There are still some months in which to settle up the estate. You can surely remain during the winter."

"I would rather not if it can be avoided. I have not much ready money."

"I will see that you are provided with sufficient for your needs until your affairs are settled."

"Thank you. I suppose I could find a place where I could board cheaply, but as soon as I am really well I must have something to employ my time. I have been thinking that I might be able to teach. I know most persons want trained teachers nowadays, but perhaps a family might be willing to take me. I am rather a good musician, and I am quite familiar with French. I know a little of Spanish, too. I see now why Spanish was so easy to me, and why I am fond of it. I thought it was because mamma liked it. My father was her teacher for a time, wasn't he?"

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"He was; and it was during that time that Mrs. Loomis saw you and was so captivated by your charms, as others have been since." Mr. Weed made a little bow.

But Nancy waved the compliment aside. "What do you think of my trying to get a position to teach?" she asked. "It would perhaps save me from loneliness and keep me from brooding."

"For those reasons it might be wise, yet it seems to me that I would not undertake it, at least I would not at present."

"Shall I have enough without? If not, what would you advise me to do?"

Mr. Weed put the tips of his fingers together and gave a few moment's frowning consideration to the question, while he sat back with pursed-up mouth and head a little to one side. "I would advise you to stay here for a few months," he said finally. "In the meantime we can find out exactly the state of your finances, and then you can determine upon your best course. It would be well if you could have some older woman with you. Could Mrs. Bertram remain?"

"I do not know, but I shall scarcely be able to pay her, dearly as I should love to have her with me. She has been so devoted, so helpful in every way, and I have learned to love her very dearly."

"Then I should not be in haste to let her go."

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"Can I afford to keep up this place with Parthy and Ira?"

"For the present it appears to me the best plan. I think you should do everything possible to establish your health before taking up the problem of a changed manner of life."

"And the doctor's bills, the druggist?"

"I will attend to them when I settle up the estate. Do not give yourself any uneasiness about those things."

"How good you are," sighed Nancy. "I feel much more hopeful, much easier in my mind. I thought it was wrong to let things go, but it is a relief not to grapple with difficulties just yet. I cannot tell you what a help you are, the one person who knows all, whose advice I can rely upon."

Mr. Weed drew himself up stiffly and moistened his dry lips, frowning the while, moved to the soul by the girl's words, yet fearing to show his emotion. "I trust you will not fail to confide in me and ask my advice whenever you desire," he said even more coldly than usual.

"And if I find I must go to work you will help me find something to do?"

He smiled in a manner which one who did not know him well might consider sarcastic, but the smile brought to Nancy only added assurance of his desire to be-

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friend her. "You must get strong and well before we talk about that," he said.

"I will try my best to get well," returned Nancy, "for I know it is important that I should. Can you keep my secret a while longer, Mr. Weed? I am afraid I do not feel equal yet to the ordeal of meeting curious eyes and of answering curious questions. It would be intolerable to me to face everyone and have them know I have been—been an impostor all these years."

Mr. Weed shook his head and frowned. "That is morbid, entirely morbid," he said. "Don't get such notions into that innocent head of yours."

"But I have felt so, ever since I came back to my reason and could think. Sometimes I have thought I would steal away by myself, without letting anyone know. I may do it yet," she said half under her breath.

Mr. Weed wheeled around suddenly and faced her. "Are you a coward?" he asked sharply. "If I do not mistake you are far from it. When you have back your health you will throw aside such a thought; you will face the world bravely. All such romantic and foolish ideas will drop from you. I am an old man and have seen much of people. I have had opportunities of studying character and I can tell you that you will never be a coward. I know you better than you know yourself."

The tears rose to Nancy's eyes. "I suppose I de-

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serve to be scolded," she said, "but I cannot help shrinking from what is ahead of me."

"You do not know what is ahead of you, none of us know. My advice is for you to rest quietly, leave your affairs in my hands and think only of what is contained in the day before you. I will guard your secret until it becomes necessary to divulge it. The Loomis heirs do not live here; they may never wish to. They may decide to sell the property. Until we are assured of what their intentions are there is no use in making any hard and fast plans."

"I feel so much better, oh, so much," Nancy told him. "I wish I could thank you properly, but please to believe that I am very, very grateful for your interest and your counsel, even for your scolding;" she smiled up at him. "I am not going to be a coward. Whenever I feel like running away I will notify you so you can head me off." She gave him her hand which he took in both of his for a moment, then, as if half ashamed of having been at all demonstrative, he quickly resumed his most business-like manner and bowed himself out as if their talk had been upon anything but intimate matters.

Nancy was watching him from the window when Parthy appeared. "Hyar him creak, Miss Nancy?" she asked, ducking her head and chuckling.

"He is a dear, good man," said Nancy, gravely, "the best friend I have in the world. He may be

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crusty on the outside, but he is fine and soft within."

"Jes' like a croquette," agreed Parthy, not meaning to be anything but amiably concurrent. "Dey do say he hones'," she went on, "an' dat he nuvver 'low his lef' han' know de performers of his right, dey do say dat."

"I can well believe it. Where is Mrs. Bertram, Parthy?"

"Mis' Bertry? She down in de gyarden. I ain't zackly proceive what she doin'. She demonstrate wif Iry awhile ago' bout de way he doin' dem crystyanthem baids. She say he ain't richen 'em 'nuff, an' dey too full o' buds to come to anythin'. She know a lot 'bout flowers, Miss Bertry do. She sutt'nly is one nice lady, rale lady ef she is a nuss. I knows. I kin spot de quality. She ain't no po' white. No suh, dat she ain't. I tells Iry she got good blood an' he say de same. Yas'm, Miss Nancy, she got good blood. How long she gwine stay, Miss Nancy?"

"Not very long, I am afraid. I can't afford to keep her much longer."

"Law, honey, what yuh talkin' 'bout, 'fordin' fo'? Ain't yuh got as much as yo' ma?"

"No, I haven't, Parthy. Some of all this goes to my father's—to Mr. Loomis's family. Mamma had only a life interest in it."

"What dat? You means dat huh chile ain't gwine to have huh house an' lan's? Humph! tell me dat ole

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atomy Weed hones'; no, he are not, not ef he cheats yuh outen yo' rights."

"He has nothing whatever to do with it. He doesn't make the law."

"What he lawyer fo' den? He ain't no kin' o' lawyer ef he kaint mek laws. Iry a gyardner an' he mek gyarden. I a cook an' I does cookin'. What kin' o' lawyer dat ole atomy, kaint mek laws?"

Nancy had to laugh. "Well, but Parthy," she argued, "Ira is a coachman but he doesn't make coaches."

Parthy disconcertedly stroked her chin. "Dat so, Miss Nancy, dat so," she acknowledged. "I reckons yuh got de right ob it dis time. Yuh wants see Mis' Bertry?"

"Yes, if she is not busy."

"She come anyway. 'Tain't nothin' she won't leave ef yuh calls." And Parthy went out leaving Nancy to smile over her arguments.

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CHAPTER IV

MOTHER!

VERY frail and pathetic looked Nancy to the nurse who entered the room a little later. Beneath the frill of the little cap the girl wore to cover her shorn head, her dark eyes looked sadly out of proportion to the wan face with its milky white skin. Her little pointed chin was sharper, her nose with its sensitive nostrils more aquiline, her hands more transparent than before her illness. Mrs. Bertram's quick eye perceived that she looked tired. "Don't you think you'd better lie down, dear?" she asked.

"Not yet," returned Nancy. "There are so many things to think about."

"And can't you think lying down?" Mrs. Bertram smiled at her.

"Perhaps I can. Very well, I will lie down if you will sit by me. I shall not have you much longer and I want all I can have of you while I can get it."

"Please don't speak of sending me away. I want to see you well and rosy before I go," said Mrs. Bertram as she settled the cushions of the couch around her.

"I don't want to speak of it. I would like to keep you with me always, dear Mrs. Bertram. I can't tell you what it has meant to have a person like your dear

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self to help and comfort me, but I do not know yet how long I can afford such a luxury as you are."

"It has meant as much to me as to you," Mrs. Bertram answered earnestly, "and please, please don't speak again of the sordid money side of it. Such a sweet, peaceful haven as this is for a storm-tossed soul is not to be found every day, and I have learned to love my little patient almost too well, for it gives me a pang even to think of leaving her."

Nancy leaned over to lay her hand upon that of her nurse who was now seated in a low chair by her side. "Have you been unhappy, too?" she asked.

"I have been. I still am very unhappy at times. It is only when I lose myself in my work, only when I am caring for those who suffer, does my life seem at all worth living."

Nancy looked with deeper interest at the calm brow, the steady blue eyes, the sweet mouth, the fast-graying hair of the woman before her. "You are very brave," she said, "and very unselfish if you can forget your own troubles in doing for others. I am afraid I can never do that. It must be very, very hard not to dwell upon one's own griefs."

"It was hard at first, but one learns. To centre one's entire thoughts upon one's own sorrows that way madness lies. If we can not busy ourselves in some vital way we become worthless to ourselves and the world."

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Nancy sighed. It would be hard to disengage her thoughts from her present sorrows, she considered, yet, for the second time that day she had been made to realize that life was a battle, and that one must not be a coward. One must look for defeats, for weariness of soul and body, for privations and sufferings, but one must not desert the ranks. "Would you mind telling me about the way you learned to be brave?" she said presently. "Would it hurt you to tell me of your sufferings? Were you very young when they came to you?"

"I was young—less than twenty-four—when the storm broke which threatened to destroy me. If it will help you I am ready to tell you, although I seldom speak of it now to anyone. Let me get my knitting first, for it is something of a long story."

She found her knitting and returned with it. Nancy lay back upon the pillows to listen. "If it will sadden you, please don't tell it," she said.

Mrs. Bertram smiled and shook her head. "Sometimes it is good discipline to be saddened," she said. "Many of us try to avoid anything that is not perfectly agreeable to see or to hear; that, too, is selfish. As our good Quaker friends say: it is borne in upon me to tell you. As you already know, I was born in a little town in Sussex, England, near the sea. My father was a clergyman. When I was seventeen he died and my mother and I were left with very small

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means to battle with the world. I had been carefully educated and a year later there came a chance for me to go to Mexico as governess in an English family. The pay was so good, the opportunity so unusual, that we decided it would be best for me to go. To leave my mother was a great grief to me; to lose me, her only child, was heartbreaking to her, but we made many plans and as the period of separation promised to be but two years we thought we must endure it. Well, I went, and all seemed as fair and promising as we had hoped. I was very young, only eighteen, and with little knowledge of the world."

"Only a year younger than I am," responded Nancy.

"Then you can understand the impression which would be made upon a young and romantic creature when she meets a man who answers to her girlish ideal, a man full of enthusiasm, ardent, imaginative, a musician, a writer, full of schemes which to him, and to so young a girl, appeared such as would work wonders in this sorry world. I was fairly carried off my feet, swept along by the current of his passion. His love-making was such as one reads of, but which does not always bring the happiest issues, yet to me a man so eager, so enthusiastic, so full of sentimentality could not fail to seem wonderful. That I, a simple girl, should be wakened by a serenader in picturesque cloak who sang fervid love songs under my window, who

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would tell me that night after night he watched in the shadows till my light went out; whom I saw waiting below to behold my face when I drew my curtain in the early morning, was nothing less than ideal. Of course all these things made their appeal as they have done a thousand times to a thousand other foolish maids. He questioned me about my home, my family. Did I have another lover? Was he the first? Had I left anyone in England whom I had reason to think might care for me? I had to confess that there was one who had liked me well enough to beg me to remain as his wife, but that I had not thought of him in any such relation, that he was only a poor curate, and that my mother was my first thought. Of this possible admirer he was madly jealous and seemed to think if I did not consent to an immediate marriage that he might lose me. So at last I yielded to the intensity of his persuasions and one night I slipped away secretly and married him, a man I knew scarcely more about than I have told you. The good people whom I left so abruptly were naturally furiously indignant, and I lost a friendship which might have served me well in later days if I had not been so foolishly precipitate."

"But it must have been an ideal love," murmured Nancy.

"It seemed so to me then, and it was for the time being. We were deliriously happy for a year, then my little son came and my husband began to resent my

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devotion to the child, although he adored him, for none loves and considers his children more than a Spaniard."

"He was a Spaniard? You didn't tell me that," remarked Nancy, who was intensely interested in the story.

"Yes, he was a Spaniard living in Mexico. He came to that country when he was about eighteen, from northern Spain. There was much that was fine about him, but his too impossible ideals led him into difficulties. After the baby's birth he absented himself from home very often to plot with others against the government. Perhaps he was right, perhaps wrong; I do not know. He wrote flaming articles which, in many cases, were published outside of Mexico. He helped to lay underhand schemes for the overthrow of the authorities then in power. These things did not bring him much in the way of money, but he had pupils, English or Americans, who wished to learn the pure Castilian rather than the cruder speech frequently spoken in Mexico. So we managed to get along. He would come home moody, depressed, or in a rage against those whom he called his enemies, yet always he was devoted to me and the child, only that smouldering fire of jealousy, that lack of faith, that unworthy suspicion was ready to burst into flame at a moment's provocation. I could never mention a return to England without bringing forth a tirade. I was tired of him. He could bring me no happiness. I wanted a lover of my own people,

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he would declare. He was a doting, mistaken imbecile to think I could continue to be true to him. Then he would regret his wild words, say that he would turn his attention to making more money, would give up his intriguing friends, and we would send for my mother and we would all be happy together. There came another baby, a little girl. Such darling children they were." Mrs. Bertram paused. Her eyes had a far-away look, and her knitting lay untouched upon her lap. Nancy, absorbed and excited, did not dare to interrupt by asking where these children were at the present time, although she longed to know.

Presently Mrs. Bertram took up her needles again. "My little girl was two years old," she went on, "when a message came that my mother was dangerously ill, and probably could not live long. She begged me to come to her. Could I do so? The message was sent by the young curate who was devoted to her. My husband was away. I made every effort to reach him but without avail. I had but little money, yet I felt I must go at all hazards. My precious, patient mother! Nothing at that moment seemed so important as the granting of her wish. I calculated that I could make the trip, spend a little time with her and return within six weeks or two months at the furthest. I hesitated about leaving the children, but they had a faithful, devoted nurse, and I knew that my husband would be inconsolable if I took them with me, so, hard as it was,

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I made up my mind to leave them. I borrowed the money, received the promise of my nearest neighbors to look in once in a while upon the children and then I started off, praying that I might reach my mother in time."

"And did you?" asked Nancy eagerly.

"Yes, and my coming was such a joy to her that sometimes I have let that thought compensate for all the trouble that came after. When I saw her I realized how cruel I had been to sacrifice her to my own desires. How could I have left her? How could I have married so precipitately? Why did I not wait? Well, dear, when one is young one does many foolish things, yet who can expect level judgment from young, inexperienced persons? If they do nothing to bring lifelong regrets I suppose it is the best that can be expected of them. Pray Heaven you may never do such."

"Oh, but I have, I have done just that," murmured Nancy. "But never mind, please go on, Mrs. Bertram, I never heard such an exciting story. Did you go back, and—and?"

"I went back as soon as I could, though not as soon as I expected, for after my dear mother's death there were necessary things to be attended to, but I wrote very, very often to my husband, and never received a word in reply. During the first weeks I had one or two post-cards from a neighbor to say the chil-

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dren were well, but after that nothing. I knew that my husband's insane jealousy had probably led him to believe that I had made my mother's illness an excuse to leave him. The message I received I had enclosed in a note which I left for him, in my anxiety forgetting that the name signed was Ernest Kirkby, the curate's."

"Oh, dear, oh, dear, but it was unfortunate under the circumstances," exclaimed Nancy.

"Terribly so, for I believe it was that which did the mischief. Well, at last I returned to the little city where we had lived, only to find my husband and children gone, none could tell me where. Poor, unhappy boy, he was not so much to blame. His plottings with revolutionists brought suspicion upon him. He was a marked man, and one night his friends hustled him on board a ship about to sail for Cuba, in order to prevent his arrest, perhaps his assassination, for it was that way, rather than another, that they were doing things in Mexico at that time. A number of his fellow-plotters did meet death by stealthy means; others fled the country, so there were few to give me any news of my husband. At last I learned where he had gone, was told he had taken the children and the nurse with him, and had left the town where we had lived, this shortly after my departure, about the time the post cards from our neighbor ceased to come. This kind neighbor, supposing I was in communication with my husband, and having nothing more to report about the

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children, had not troubled to write again. After learning that he sailed for Cuba I went there, and in time found that he had gone to the United States. It is a large place, my dear, and I never found him nor my children. The last news I received was from a relative of his in Spain to whom I wrote as a last resort. I had a short reply which said that he was dead and that no information could be given about the children."

"Oh, me, what a grief!" cried Nancy. "Dear Mrs. Bertram, you are right, your sorrow is heavier than mine. How could you have borne it?"

"I had hope left. I have never given up hope. At first I felt that I could never forgive my husband for robbing me of my children, for his unjust and cruel suspicions, for his lack of faith in me. But, as time went on, I realized that I must have something to fill my heart and mind, and at the advice of my good physician I studied nursing. I was still young, and I knew I might have many years to live. There seemed but one way to atone for the sorrow I had brought to my mother, and that was to relieve the sufferings of others; but one way to forget my own griefs and that was to help others bear theirs."

"That is very noble, very wonderful," said Nancy thoughtfully, "I am afraid I could never rise to such heights as you have done."

Mrs. Bertram ignored this remark and said, "So now you see how I came by my profession. I have

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visited most of the large cities in this country, always hoping to discover some clue which would lead me to my children. I adopted the Anglicized version of my husband's name at the outset, because I feared he might discover me in my searchings, and in his resentment might spirit away the children before I could see him and explain."

"And what is the Spanish version of your name?" inquired Nancy.

"Beltrán. My husband's name was José Beltrán. In English Joseph Bertram."

"Beltrán! Beltrán!" Nancy sat up with a sharp cry, clasped her hands over her heart and gazed at the nurse with startled eyes. "There could not be two, could there? No, there could not. Wait!" She sprang from the couch with more energy than prudence and ran to a drawer, produced a key, then opened the old escritoire bringing back the letters which had so overcome her upon first reading them. These, scattered upon the floor Ira had carefully gathered together after Nancy had left them there, and had as carefully locked them up in the desk, putting the key where he knew it belonged.

The girl was so agitated when she returned to Mrs. Bertram that she could scarcely speak. She thrust the packet into the nurse's hands. "Read them! Read them!" she cried, then sank back against the pillows, to watch every expression of Mrs. Bertram's face.

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First there was curiosity, then wonder, then agitation. The usually self-controlled woman leaned forward trembling. "Tell me, tell me," she said, in a tense voice, "where did you get these?"

"They were written to my adopted mother, Mrs. Virginia Loomis," answered Nancy, scarce above her breath.

"Your adopted mother!" cried Mrs. Bertram. "You are not actually the child of Mrs. Loomis? Oh, you must be; the doctor would have known. Oh, you must be."

"I am not," declared Nancy, sitting up and clasping her hands together. "I am not. Mr. Weed knows. Oh, I have been so unhappy. I have felt so alone since I found it out, but now—but now!"

Mrs. Bertram leaned back and pressed her hands against her eyes. "It is a dream," she murmured. "Oh, yes, it is a dream. I have dreams such as this." Then she steadied herself, grasping the arms of her chair and saying with assumed composure. "If you are an adopted daughter, if you are not Nancy Loomis, what is your true name?"

"It is Anita Beltrán," replied Nancy, tremulously. "I am your daughter. José Beltrán was my father. Mother! Mother! Love me, oh, please love me."

With a little moaning sound Mrs. Bertram gathered the girl into her arms and kissed her eyelids, her cheeks, her hands, murmuring, "My baby, my

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little Nita, my baby girl. Oh, dear God I thank Thee! I thank Thee. My darling, oh, my darling! Let me hold you close. No, it is not a dream. My darling! My darling!"

Nestled in her mother's arms the girl sat, a feeling of great content stealing over her. "No more alone, no more alone," she whispered. "Now, I want to get well," she said at last, as she lifted her head.

Her mother held her off a little way. "Let me look at you, my precious," she said. "Why did I not see it before? You have your father's eyes, great, melting, brown eyes; you have my English skin, but for the rest you are a mixture, but why did I not know instinctively?"

"With this funny shaved head, and this cap how could you see any resemblance?" asked Nancy. "Have I a brother, too, do you think? I am sure I have. He is somewhere. I must hurry and get well, then we will go away together and look for him. What is his name?"

"He is little Joseph, Pepé, as they call it in Spain."

"Nancy is the diminutive of Anna, just as Anita is in Spanish. Hereafter I am Anita Beltrán, and we will go away together and find my brother Pepé."

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CHAPTER V

Other Names and Places

The remaining period of Nancy's convalescence meant days of happy intercourse, hours of confidences, nights of peace for both mother and daughter. Mr. Weed was sent for and agreed with them that for the present it might be as well not to announce the news of the discovery. He showed as much interest and sympathy as it was in him to display, which was much less than that which would have been manifested by any other person, yet Nancy was convinced of his real pleasure in the matter.

"While you remain here, and until everything is settled it would be best that you retain your name of Nancy Loomis," he advised. "Mrs. Bertram, for the same obvious reasons, will not desire to resume the name of her husband."

"I certainly do not want to be considered a seven days' wonder, and to feel that everyone is staring at us and whispering about us every time we appear in public; that would be intolerable," declared Nancy. "No, dear Mr. Weed, we will just jog along as we have been doing, and will go quietly away together when I am strong enough. No one will think it peculiar that Mrs. Bertram should be going with me. We shall

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begin immediately to search for my brother, and we shall find him, if he is to be found."

"I trust you will not fail in your search, and I wish you all possible success," returned Mr. Weed, which was a good deal for him to say, Nancy thought. "You may be interested to know," he went on, "that Mr. Adrian Loomis and his sisters do not care to reside in this place, and have decided to offer this property for sale. They will come down to look it over in course of time. They have requested me to secure proper caretakers for such time as it may lie idle. If you have no other plans for Parthenia and Ira I have thought they might very properly be offered the place."

"Indeed, I think they would be the very ones," replied Nancy, "and I am sure it will be a great comfort to the poor old souls to be left in charge. It will be hard for me to part from them," she sighed. "Indeed, it will be hard for me to part from a great many things, from a great many persons, yourself in particular, Mr. Weed." The chief reason why Nancy had endeared herself to this very diffident man was that she seemed intuitively to be able to penetrate beneath his reserve, and to accept him as quite as responsive a person as any other. He was known to be a man of ability, honest and astute, consequently was held in high esteem, but there were none who treated him with Nancy's informality, who gave him such easy confidence, such unabashed trust, consequently she

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occupied a place in his barred and locked heart that no other possessed.

He bowed stiffly at Nancy's implied compliment, but was more wooden than ever as he continued. "If you desire me to continue to take charge of your affairs I can assure you of my conscientious attention to them."

"Oh, dear me, yes, do please look after them always, Mr. Weed. I shouldn't be happy if anyone else took charge of them, no matter where I might be. Will it make any difference, Mr. Weed, if I happen to be away off somewhere?"

"Not in the least. There are the mails, you know, and in emergencies there is the telegraphic means of communication."

"That will be comforting to remember. If I lose my pocket-book or find I can't pay my board bill, I shall wire you straight off, and you will come to my rescue, won't you?"

"I will endeavor to do so," replied Mr. Weed very stiffly.

Nancy laughed, "You always take me so terribly in earnest," she said, "but joking aside, Mr. Weed, I think we shall be able to get along. My mother has a small income and with that added to mine, we believe it will serve if we are economical. If we do not find my brother in this country we shall go abroad."

"I suspected that would be your intention. Prob-

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ably it would not be amiss, in any event. Then I am to understand, Miss Nancy, that I am not to disclose the fact of your change of name until it appears a necessity?"

"Oh ,please don't say anything yet. Let the story leak out by degrees after a while, after we have been gone for some time and people are forgetting about me; that will mean less talk and comment, don't you think?"

"I agree with you, and will endeavor to follow out your wishes in this, as in every other respect." So he took up his hat, but at the door gave his little habitual cough and said. "I regret that necessity urges you to leave us, Miss Nancy, but I trust you will not forget your old friends, your old home, and that some day you will return to us."

"I shall never forget, never," answered Nancy, emphatically, "and I shall be writing to you, of course."

"I am gratified that occasion will require it," responded Mr. Weed, and went out.

Nancy returned to the house. She felt very hopeful, almost buoyant. Something of her own mother's brave spirit was reflected in her. She had grown immeasurably in character since trouble had befallen her, and in the hours of self-communion, which a sick-bed must always induce, she had come face to face with the invisible powers which encourage a view of spiritual realities. Her mother's story enabled her better to un-

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derstand values, though with this understanding came a truer realization of what she had given up in dismissing Terrence Wirt.

To the faltering tale of her romance her mother listened with grave interest. "No wonder, my darling, that all these shocks were too much for your poor little brain," she said. "How true it is that when troubles arrive they are so liable not to come singly but in battalions. It may be that it is to test our strength, our faith, our courage to the uttermost. Even a knowledge of enduring love comes to us many times in the midst of adversity."

"How well you understand. It is so comforting that you do understand, madre, and it is because you, too, had such great sorrows coming one after another. Yet how much braver you were than I. You did not succumb to them, but went right on."

"Ah, no. You must not think that. I did not go right on. At first I seemed paralyzed. I sank down, down into a gulf of despair, and only the necessity of action, the glimmer of that spark of hope led me forward."

"It will still lead you forward to find Pepé." She sat leaning against her mother's shoulder in silence for a moment, then she said wistfully, "Dear madre, do you think there is a faint glimmer, the faintest sort of glimmer of hope that I shall ever meet Terrence again? Of course I realize," she added quickly, "that

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everything is changed. We are poor. I am no longer the daughter of Mrs. James Loomis, no longer the heiress to this estate, but only the child of José Beltrán, whom no one ever heard of. In this locality family counts for everything, even for more than money. With my own precious mother I can face anything; I do not care for any of the things I have been taught to believe are the most worth while, yet I believe I shall always care for Terrence."

"He would be a very snobbish person if he were to avoid you for any reason except the one which sent him from you. If he truly loves you it is yourself only which counts."

"I wonder if he did truly love me," returned Nancy meditatively. "Could he have given me up if he had done so? No, I cannot believe yet that he really cared."

Mrs. Bertram looked at her wistfully. Her impulse was to remind the girl that it was she who had done the giving up, and it was a temptation to reassure her, yet why attempt it when there appeared little hope that the affair would ever be resumed! From what Nancy had told her she believed young Wirt to be worthy of the girl's love, but, until she had a personal knowledge, she felt that she must guard against bringing any more unhappiness into her daughter's life. The child has suffered enough as it is, she told herself.

The days slipped by until one afternoon came a tearful parting from the old home, from Parthy and

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Ira, both of whom openly lamented, yet looked forward to Miss Nancy's return in the spring. "Gwine souf fo' de wintah," was the word passed by the old retainers. "Tek de nuss. She dat sot on Miss Nancy kaint hire huh to leave, no way you fix it," Parthy told a neighbor. "When she comin' back? Laws, honey, she don' know no mo'n de daid. She boun' ter git her healf 'stored, Mis' Bertry say. Yas'm, me an' Iry stay right hyar." So even the most curious gossips had no idea of the true state of things when Nancy's farewells were made.

More than one well-known face was seen in the group gathered at the station. Good Mrs. Lippett, Patterson, his sister Betty, the Carters, the Browns, Dr. Plummer and, last of all, Mr. Weed. To him Nancy stretched forth her hand from the car window as the train began to move. He ran like a marionette to give her a final hand-clasp. "Good-bye, my best friend, good-bye," said Nancy brokenly. Then as the train moved faster it seemed as if it were the group which slipped away. With misty eyes she watched the little crowd disperse, her last impression being that of a sobbing old mammy, and the wooden features of the lawyer strangely distorted into something like emotion.

"I believe he was ready to cry," said Nancy half hysterically as she drew in her head. Then she turned her face toward the window while the tears rolled down

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her own cheeks. She was leaving forever the only home she had ever known.

It was one morning of the following spring that from the deck of a vessel lying off the little white city of Cadiz, the mother and daughter looked earnestly toward land. The girl's short curly hair was blown about her face by the wind from the sea, and she pushed it back from her eager eyes that she might better take in the view of the wide granite quay, the great sea walls and projecting bastions; then her eyes traveled further to where the tall houses rose, silver-white, against an intensely blue sky. "Spain!" murmured the girl, clasping her hands closely. "Spain! The home of my father's people. I know I shall love it."

"So shall I," returned her mother, "for your father's sake. Poor, mistaken José, if only he had realized how I loved him; if only he had believed in me. Ah, Anita, I am so divided between hope and fear—hope that we shall find my little Pepé, fear that he, too, has left this earth."

Anita, now quite accustomed to her new name, pressed her mother's hand and drew closer to her. "Hope, mother, hope. You mustn't fear. I intend to keep on hoping till I have every proof that there is no longer any reason to doubt. We shall find him. I feel sure we shall, if not here then somewhere."

"So you said when we reached New Orleans, and Cuba the same."

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"SPAIN," MURMURED THE GIRL

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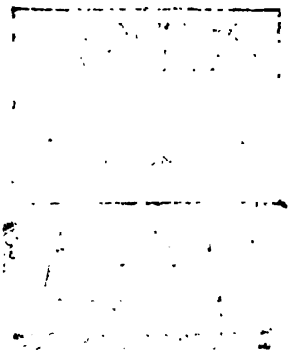

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"So I still say. The farther we go the more convinced I am. Oh, mother, dear, there could be nothing more marvellous than the fortune which sent you to me; after that I must believe that anything is possible." She waved a hand toward the city. "Are you there, brother?" she cried. "Come down and meet us."

"Oh, daughter," her mother smiled half sadly, "how confident you are. Is it because you are so young or because you really have a prophetic instinct?"

"A little of each, perhaps," returned Anita gaily. "Have I not had experiences enough to warrant me in my faith? Think of my condition a year ago, motherless, homeless, poor, and now look at me: my own mother by my side and sufficient means to make a home with her when our voyagings are over. Dear, good old weedy Weed to manage so well that I should have enough, not great wealth, but enough. We can live comfortably on our little income in England, you said, and when we find Pepé we can go there."

"Ah, Pepé, Pepé," murmured her mother.

"I could almost hope," said Anita after a pause, that we shall not find him in southern Spain, for I should love to see much of the country. Is it very far north that my father's people live?"

"The few remaining relatives live in the extreme north. You know there are none left nearer than cousins, and perhaps an aunt or uncle by marriage, yet it

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is in the north that we shall be most liable to find your brother, for we were told in New Orleans that the boy was sent in care of a friend to Spain, and what more likely than that he was sent to relatives?"

"You never found out the name of the friend?"

"No, you remember the little French woman, who told us, could not remember; it had been so long ago, she said."

"It was wonderful that we should have discovered her, wasn't it? and that it was in her house my father died? It is all wonderful, and that is why I cannot help feeling that nothing is too strange to expect. You said you had written, to the aunt, was it?"

"To the uncle, but he was no longer living and his widow who replied knew nothing of a Pepé Beltrán from America; that is why, Anita, I have so little hope, such a little lad; he may have died on the journey over."

There was no time to reply for the moment had come when they must disembark from the steamer, and they were soon on their way to the simple hotel to which they had been directed. It seemed as if Anita, once on Spanish soil, had acquired a light-heartedness and gaiety which had been foreign to her for many months. In Europe not only was she confident of finding her brother, but she had a lingering hope of encountering Terrence Wirt. She had satisfied herself that he had not returned home, and while she was still doubtful of his real devotion to her, she, nevertheless,

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wove many a dream on the way over as she lay back in her steamer chair, apparently asleep. If only she might know, in some mysterious way, of his real feeling for her, whether he had found some other to whom he could give that quality of affection which she had demanded. Perhaps he had already married. Perhaps he would return before she did and would marry one of the girls whom he had met in her neighborhood, Lulu Fauntleroy, or Alice Patterson. She would clench her hands when this thought came, feeling that she could not stand it, then she would suddenly fling aside her steamer rug, spring up and pace the deck. The despondent moments came when she realized that she might never return to America, when she remembered that she was no longer the Nancy Loomis who had attracted Terrence Wirt, a girl with prospects, with golden locks, with a right to be imperious and exacting. In place of the smooth golden locks there was the dark curly hair, for one thing; there was a new name for another, and there was no longer the right, except that of youth, to demand from the world all she had considered her just deserts. However, none of these thoughts troubled her as they were conducted to their hotel in Cadiz. Here were green fields and pastures new, and she was young.

As her mother took the pen to register, she turned to Anita and hesitated a little. "You will return to the Spanish name, won't you, mother?" said the girl.

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Her mother nodded. "Yes, it is better so," she answered, and wrote: "Doña Catalina Beltrán; Señorita Anita Beltrán, and from henceforth by these names they were known.

From Cadiz to Seville and on to Madrid they travelled, making inquiries at each city. In Madrid they established themselves for a time in a Casa de Huespedes, near the Puerta del Sol. "I feel as if we might stand a better chance of finding your brother here than in any other large city, unless it be Barcelona," said Mrs. Beltrán.

Anita looked out upon the moving crowds in the streets. "It will be like hunting a needle in a haystack, but I am glad of the excuse to stay here, even if we do not meet much encouragement. Madrid! The Prado! they are such magic words, like the Giralda at Seville, and the Alhambra at Granada. I must devote more time to study. I want to learn to speak Spanish perfectly. I am glad you have not forgotten it, mother."

"Oh, but I have forgotten much. I never knew it perfectly, enough for ordinary conversation, the names of commonplace things, perhaps."

"But with my father how did you manage?"

"He was more ready to learn English than I Spanish. He spoke two or three languages and was a true linguist."

Anita nodded thoughtfully. "That is why mamma said I had inherited the gift; I thought then that she

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meant I had inherited it from Mr. Loomis. I mean to keep my ears open and shall pick up all I can, shall chatter to the shopkeepers, study, read, and some day I shall be taken for a Spaniard."

Her mother smiled a little sadly. "That, too, is like your father; nothing was quite so good to him as a thing Spanish."

"Except yourself," retorted Anita.

Her mother looked very serious. "Could he have thought so and have lost faith so easily?"

Anita was on her knees in a moment to throw her arms around her mother. "Oh, dearest," she cried, "forgive me. I am too mean for anything, too mean and thoughtless."

The deepest affection had sprung up between the mother and daughter, born, originally of the dependence of patient upon nurse, but growing stronger and stronger after their true relationship was discovered. It may be said that the spoiled, wilful, excitable girl was not easily brought under her mother's complete control. She was used to having her own way, to dominating Mrs. Loomis, the governess, the servants, and more than one battle royal took place before there was an adjustment of difficulties. There was too much of her father in her make-up for her to yield opinions readily, but, as time went on, she grew more reasonable, and though she might rush off in a passion of tears, she would return repentant when the storm was

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over, shower kisses upon her mother and beg to be loved. The realities of life came more and more to make their impress upon her, romantic dreams held less sway, while travel was beginning to bring her greater poise, more tolerance and calmer judgment.

Madrid supplied no material hope for finding Pepé and at last in a little village in northern Spain, at the foot of the mountains they found themselves. A small *fonda* sheltered them and from this point they expected to start their inquiries.

"I did not much expect we should find Pepé until we reached this neighborhood, did you, mother?" said Anita, standing before the mirror and brushing her short locks.

"It would seem the most promising place, yet——"

"Oh, I know what that aunt-in-law wrote, but he may not have gone to those people; there are some cousins, you said. Isn't it queer, mother? I am a totally different looking person from the one you first saw. My hair is growing darker and darker. I rather like it so, for it makes me look more Spanish, don't you think so?"

"Much more so, although there are fair-haired Spaniards, especially in this part of the country."

"Yes, I know; I have seen a few, but I like the effect of the dark hair and eyes with the pure whiteness of the skin. There are many like that. As they

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lean over the balconies, at a distance they look so very fetching even though they may not be at all pretty. Shall we wear mantillas? I haven't seen a hat since I came into this town. I'd love to wear a mantilla."

She went out on the *corredor* and leaned on the ledge, looking off toward the mountains towering up so near. There was a sound of water trickling from the fountain to which all day long women and children went with brass-bound buckets poised upon their heads. There was the tinkle of a mandolin, and a man's voice trolling out a long-sustained note at the close of a mountaineer's song. Then came the jangling of bells as a muleteer drew up his gaily caparisoned team before the door, and left it there to go into the *cantina* below from which issued the sound of clinking glasses and laughter. Above all the silent stars gleamed peacefully or dropped suddenly behind the sombre green of the mountains.

Anita turned. "Come out, mother. *Ven aqui,*" she repeated. "It is so lovely and restful. Listen to that song. Isn't it truly Spanish? There, he is singing another, oh, so pathetically."

"Soy de Pravia,
Soy Praviana,
Y mi madre es de Pravia."

the clear, high tenor voice reached them.

"It almost makes me weep," said Anita, "and yet

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all he is saying is that he is of Pravia and his mother is of Pravia, but it is such a haunting air, so different from anything we might hear at home. Don't you like it all, and aren't you content to stay a long, long while? It is so quiet and pleasant and so delightfully cheap."

They stood together till the singer had ceased, the brightest star which they had been watching, was lost behind the mountain, and only the song of the fountain, and the queer little tink-tank, tink-a-tank of the night insects broke the silence. Then they went in.

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CHAPTER VI

O LAS PIEDRAS!

THE travellers were awakened in the early morning by the drone of cow-carts, by the singing of a thrush in a cage hung at the doorway of their inn, and by the chatter of girls flocking to the fountain. As soon as she was dressed Anita went out upon the balcony to look down on the little plaza which was lively enough now that the village was awake. Groups of women and girls gossiped at the fountain; the shoemaker across the way kept time to his singing with the tap-tap upon his last; the little *moza* of the inn skurried from the bakery with freshly-baked loaves for the señorita's breakfast; half a dozen bright-plumaged parrots paraded up and down before the door of a shop, laughingly watched by a group of men; two turkeys honk-honked below the balcony, turning up an inquiring eye at the possible bestower of bounty watching from above.

Anita was called inside by a tap at the door from the little maid who summoned the ladies to their coffee, with "*A comer, señoritas.*"

"It is all so unusual and interesting," declared Anita as she sat down to the table. "I see where I spend all my idle hours on the balcony. "What are we to do to-day, mother?"

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"We shall go by train to a small city near here, and from there to the little village where your father was born."

"Why didn't we go directly there?"

"Because it is not conveniently reached; there is no good *fonda,* and the city itself would be more expensive."

"Excellent reasons, *madre mia.* How lucky it is that you can speak Spanish. Scarce anyone knows English and in these out-of-the-way places how could we manage?"

"Not very well, especially with the persons whom we shall want to question. Officials, shopkeepers, as well as persons of social standing, generally know French, but the peasants and those living in remote villages, naturally, know nothing but their mother tongue. The train leaves at ten, Anita, so we must not linger. I wouldn't advise you to go again on that fascinating balcony unless you want me to leave you behind."

Anita, at this suggested possibility, did not dally, but went directly to the room which she and her mother occupied together, for there was no other available. It was exquisitely neat; clean, fine linen upon each bed, soft blankets, and mattresses the most comfortable that could be imagined; they were stuffed with wool which was picked over and washed every year. A table, two chairs, a huge washstand, a large

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mirror completed the furnishings. The board floor was spotless from daily scrubbing, the curtains hand-spun and home-dyed, but there was never a clothes press nor a dressing bureau in sight. The tall water jug held fresh, clear water and a like one of hot water was brought to them each morning.

"We can hang up our clothes on the floor à la Japanese, I suppose," Anita had remarked upon viewing the room. But a few nails driven in the door supplied hanging space for the time being and sufficed, since they knew their stay would be short.

"We should best wear our hats on the train," remarked Mrs. Beltrán before they started. "I am not Spanish enough to don a mantilla or to wear merely a veil upon every occasion."

"Oh, you dear Englishy mother," cried Anita. "Well, as I am half English I will follow the custom half the time." She settled her hat upon her curly head saying: "There, I look like any American girl, for I have completely un-Spanished myself, and with my stately mother will be recognized anywhere as an *Inglesa*. What do we do when we get to the town?"

"We shall be met by your father's cousin, Doña Benilda. She is to guide us to the village."

"As she is my cousin, too, I hope I shall like her," remarked Anita as they started forth.

The tinkle of a bell, the call of "*Senores viajeres para Santander al tren*" and the train, upon which

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Anita and her mother had been travelling, glided off, leaving them upon the platform looking curiously around. How, among the many black clad women, were they to distinguish Doña Benilda? Peasant women with little shawls across their shoulders or folded over their heads trudged off with baskets; girls, daintily shod, with hair carefully arranged, chattered in groups, workmen in blue jeans moved with deliberation about the platform. Presently a middle-aged, dark-eyed little woman, enveloped from head to foot in a black veil, and followed by a little maid, came up to the strangers. "Doña Catalina and Señorita Anita, my cousins, without doubt," she said in Spanish.

"And our cousin Doña Benilda," replied Mrs. Beltrán in the same tongue. "But how did you know us so readily?"

"Oh, the hats, the hats," returned Doña Benilda, smiling. Then she kissed them on each cheek, summoned the little maid to carry their bags and they started up the street of the quaint and pretty town, mountains on one side, the great Cantabric Sea on the other. Now that the tide was coming in it rose in certain streets, lapping against the sides of ancient houses whose small slits of windows had looked out for centuries upon the incoming or outgoing flood. The little market place was lively with shoppers, while from the grim, gray old church issued a throng of black-robed women, mantillas on heads and missals in hands.

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Before the door of one of the fairly modern apartment houses the party paused to mount many stairs and at last to find themselves in Doña Benilda's high-up rooms where the guests were welcomed with much ceremony; the house was theirs, they were told. From the balcony swung vines and gay flowering plants; a bird chirped in a gilded cage by a curtained window; there were many rooms, many mirrors, few pictures, a large and ornate representation of the Virgin of Covadonga the most prized. The *sala,* arranged after the regulation style of that part of the country, showed a bent-wood sofa with three chairs ranged at each end in regular order and facing one another. One or two old cabinets, an antique chest, a high antique refectory table, finely carved, completed the furniture. From the windows of one of the rooms one beheld the range of mountains fading off into the clouds; on the other side sparkled the sea. The long sea wall, time-worn, small-eaved stone houses, a distant church perched upon a hill, peeped out from the green of trees, and farther off the white houses of a village showed themselves enclosed in thick embowerage.

Anita had a strange feeling of association with it all. The home of her ancestors it was which Doña Benilda pointed out to her, the church where her father was baptized and the distant village where he was born. "Cuesta is the name," Doña Benilda told her. "We go there to-morrow."

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Though understanding something of the talk Anita was obliged to turn frequently to her mother to interpret.

"My daughter has not yet become very proficient in her father's language," Mrs. Beltrán explained. "She can speak a little, read more, but it is another thing to understand what is said to her."

Doña Benilda replied animatedly. "When comes in my son Rodrigo, he will speak in the English," she said with pride. "At once he will come," she added as she led them to their rooms. Exquisitely embroidered linen, wonderful counterpanes, blankets of the finest covered the beds, but beyond this the rooms displayed very simple furnishing.

Before long appeared Don Rodrigo, a funny looking little man who might have been of any age. He was small, dark, lean. His hair was black and bushy, his small moustache carefully waxed and turned up at the ends. With arms too short and head too big for his body, Anita told herself that he looked exactly like a boy doll. He advanced on high heels, bent low before her mother, kissed her hand and said that he kissed her feet. Before Anita he paused a moment as if wondering if he might take the cousinly privilege of kissing her upon either cheek, but observing that she gave no encouragement to this sort of greeting, he also kissed her hand and murmured that the house and its contents

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were hers, and that he was her cousin who kissed her feet.

But Anita, understanding little of the courtly phrases and wishing to ask questions, said: "You speak English, do you not, cousin?"

"Si, señorita, I spik a leetle," was the reply, "no mooch, enough maybe for tell you somethings you like know. I am wishing I spik baitter, but no I have the, what is this?—the opportunidad."

"The opportunity," Mrs. Beltrán came to the rescue.

"Ah, *si.* You also spik the Spanish. *Usted habla Espanol?*" He turned with quick relief to her.

"Tell him, mother," said Anita, "that I will help him with his English if he will help me with my Spanish."

"*Bueno!*" cried Rodrigo when this was explained. "Is good. I like mooch thees—thees—*arreglo.*" He looked inquiringly at Mrs. Beltrán.

"Arrangement," she helped him to the word.

"*Gracias.* I like these arrangements," he said slowly and uncertainly, with much rolling of his R's.

Here Doña Benilda came to bid them to the meal she had prepared with the assistance of the little maid, and Rodrigo gave his arm, with much ceremony, to Mrs. Beltrán, while Anita followed with his mother.

The midday meal was a substantial one, beginning with the hearty *puchero,* a soup to which vegetables,

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chicken, ham and sausage gave substance. The solid part of the soup, in which chick-peas (*garbanzos*) formed a prominent part, served as a second course. A wonderful omelet in which fried potatoes and herbs were folded, salad, fruit and cheese followed, while a good red wine was served all through the meal. Later coffee was brought into the *sala*.

There was much pleasant talk, some in English, some in French, some in Spanish, and Anita decided, that, however unlike her friends at home these new found cousins might be, that they were kind and hospitable to the very last degree.

It was still early in the day, but as deliberation marked the Spanish movements, they did not start on their walk to Cuesta till long past noon. However, as they intended to stop over night with relatives, Doña Benilda did not seem to think it mattered.

"You walk well?" inquired Rodrigo as they started out through the streets of the Venice-like little city.

Anita, a trifle puzzled, answered that she hoped so, that she was fond of walking, deciding that the latter was the proper reply to the question.

Leaving the town they struck the *carretera*, the hard white road which they followed for some distance, the sea always in sight, but after some miles they came to a divergence of ways, and took the road bearing overhill to the embowered little village of Cuesta. On its outskirts an ancient church offered its friendly

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porch as a resting place for the weary. They found it already occupied when they reached it. Two women with baskets sat on one of the benches, a little lame boy, with a baby toddler in charge, lounged on the steps, and two young persons, evidently sweethearts, moved away consciously at the sight of strangers. But the peasant women stopped their gossip for only a moment and the lame boy regarded them with pleased interest.

Anita dropped down on the nearest bench. "*O, las piedras!*" she exclaimed. "Why, why, my cousin, do they have these roads paved so horribly and have such nice smooth *carreteras?*"

"It is for the cow," returned Rodrigo, "always for the cow. Here you paircebay is a many farm, all is the hay, the cow, the corn. If no the angular and uneben stone to the road the cow is to recline—how you say?—is fall down when come wetness of road. No is goodth for the cow. He is, yes, he is fall down when is make the journey weeth the load of hay."

"I see, I understand. Many things are being explained to me," Anita responded. "I wondered why they did not grease their cart wheels, but now I understand that upon the narrow mountain roads there are sometimes places where the cow-carts cannot pass, and if one driver hears a screaking sound in the distance his own team can wait for the other to pass at the proper point."

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Rodrigo looked bewildered. "I regret you spik so rapeedth, no I can walk behindth you."

Anita could not forbear laughing, at which Rodrigo looked rather offended. "I beg your pardon," she made haste to say, drawing down her mouth though the laughter lingered in her eyes, "I say just as funny things in Spanish of course, and you are too polite to laugh at me." She tried to speak slowly, "You may laugh at me all you wish," she went on.

"I will not make laugh at you," he returned gravely. "I could not, but if you will please you tell me when I am make mistake I am grateful. What is thees I say no right?"

"You should have said you could not follow me; in English it does not always mean the same as walk behind."

"The dictionary tell me."

"Oh, the dictionary; but dictionaries and idioms do not always agree."

"Ediom, ediom? Ediom is a language, no?"

"A peculiarity of a language, as we understand it."

"Ah, I perceibay. Is difficult thees English."

However the difficulties were eagerly hunted out and presented from time to time by this zealous seeker for information, and Anita discovered that her cousin Rodrigo was far more persevering and eager than herself in acquiring facility, although she was in a country whose speech she much desired to know. They

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spent most of their period of rest on the old porch of the church in exchanging lessons, but tarried long enough to go into the building and examine the tarnished gilt of its images, the frayed altar cloths and the dingy hangings. Here, Doña Benilda told them, "our grandfathers had their first lessons. An old priest was their teacher. They learned to write, to cipher, upon the bone of an ox, the shoulder blade it was. Those days are past, but Ave Maria! we are no better in spite of the schools of to-day."

Anita pondered over this page from the past as they descended the steep hill. "Oh, these *piedras*," she mourned as her thin-soled shoes struck the pointed stones jutting up from the roughly paved way. "I shall never need to do worse penance. How do they manage?" she asked as she saw two girls ahead tripping unconcernedly down the hill in high-heeled shoes.

"Always they have done so," Rodrigo told her, "and no longer does it appear a difficult thing. Let us sit down and rest for some moments. I will bring you a refreshment, a cup of the cold water from the good fountain so quite near."

The little company sat down on a stone near a grove of huge eucalyptus trees, and presently bringing his cup of water, Rodrigo returned, first presenting a draught to Mrs. Beltrán and then, bowing low, he held out the cup to Anita saying:

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" Drink to me only with the eye,
And I am plague by mine,
Or drop a kees to the cope,
And no more I am asking for—"

Ah-h, I am forget thees. The *vino,* what is?"

" The wine," Anita answered, scarcely able to hold the cup of water for mirth. She dared not laugh, and scarcely could drink without choking. She managed to control herself, however, and returned the cup saying: " *Mil gracias, señor.* The water is delicious and the poetry very beautiful."

" So I think," returned Rodrigo, well satisfied with himself. " Now we will descend, and at the basest part of the hill we discover the birth village of your father."

Into the village so thickly embowered in trees, they entered to find the streets paved as roughly as the roads. The quiet of late afternoon was upon the place and the bells of the church were ringing the Angelus.

" It is to our cousin Prudencia that we go," Rodrigo told Anita as they turned up a narrow lane, and finally came upon a gate set in one of the high walls between which they had been walking. Inside the gate was a typical homestead of northern Spain; a garden of flowers, apple trees neighboring orange and lemon boughs, chestnuts elbowing figs, geraniums as high as your head, roses, heliotrope making the air sweet, carnations swinging from balconies, an orio for corn, a cow stable, hen house and pigeon cote annexed to

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the house whose red tiled roof rose but a story higher. A brick-paved lower floor showed dining room and kitchen, in the latter an altar-like structure where a charcoal fire served for cooking all meals. Upstairs the *sala* and bedrooms with balconies before them and windows looking out upon the garden and beyond through the close clustering trees to the sea.

At the door they were met by Doña Prudencia, dignified, calm, stately. "These are our cousins, Catalina and Anita." Doña Benilda presented them.

Doña Prudencia kissed them on either cheek and ushered them into the house. "The wife and daughter of José Maria, my childhood's friend and companion," she said thoughtfully. "Ai, Ai, poor José Maria!" She crossed herself solemnly and sat gazing abstractedly out of the window. It was rather an awkward moment, for Mrs. Beltrán was well aware that no good report of her had reached her husband's relatives in those early days of their first separation, and she was not at all sure that prejudices they might still hold.

The interview was interrupted by the entrance of a dark-skinned, blue-eyed girl about Anita's age. "My daughter, Amparo," said Doña Prudencia.

After the usual cousinly greeting the two girls smiled at each other and Anita felt that she should like this cousin.

"You must be ready for a *merienda*," said Am-

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paro, leading the way to a room where cakes and chocolate were ready to be served. "We have been expecting you all afternoon, Benilda, and you, Rodrigo. Why were you so late?"

"We stopped to look at the old church," Rodrigo explained, "and our cousins are not used to these rough roads."

Then the talk was of generalities and the main object of the visit was obliged to wait a later hour.

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CHAPTER VII

A Clue

It was Doña Benilda who at last turned the conversation into those channels which would lead up to the subject in which Mrs. Beltrán and Anita were so vitally interested. "You must hear Catalina's story, Prudencia," she said, "so romantic, so pathetic it is, and we so misled by false reports."

Doña Prudencia sat with folded hands and grave face looking thoughtfully into space. "It is well to hear both sides of a question," she responded at last. "I never believed half I heard, and since I have seen Catalina I believe still less. Will you tell us, Catalina, so much as you would like us to hear?"

"We have come, as perhaps you know," began Mrs. Beltrán, leaning eagerly forward, "to learn, if possible, something of Pepé, my son Pepé. Benilda thinks you may have heard something of him. Have you?"

"Not lately," returned Doña Prudencia after a pause.

"Tell her your story," urged Doña Benilda, and Mrs. Beltrán began a recital of her experiences. As she continued she was frequently interrupted by such fervent exclamations as *"Ave Maria Sanctissima! Madre mia! Que lastima! Que desgracia!"* accompanied by the sign of the cross made solemnly.

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"So you perceive," Doña Benilda came in eagerly at the end of the story, "it was not as we were told by our Uncle Marcos, nor as Pilar would have us believe. The mother was not in the wrong; she did not desert her children; it was José Maria who deserted her."

"*Pobrecita, pobrecita,*" murmured Doña Prudencia. "Poor José Maria, so impetuous, so mistaken. Ah, if he had but sent his son to me all would have been well, but alas, it was to our Uncle Marcos he was sent, the uncle of your husband, my poor Catalina. Had he but come to me all would have been different. He would have taken the place of my own child, my little boy who died. But it was this way: My father Candido and his brother Marcos had a bitter quarrel and did not speak for years. I do not know whether José Maria was aware of this, but he knew, I think, of my father's death, and probably realizing that Uncle Marcos was his nearest relative he considered him the proper person to take charge of the boy. But Uncle Marcos was a hard man, a hoarder of money, and his wife, a woman of the lower class, was equally parsimonious and unloving, so that the little child had not a happy life. They live in another village, but I saw him once at a *fiesta;* he was pointed out to me as the son of my cousin, José Maria, but I did not think he resembled the father."

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"Tell me," interrupted Mrs. Beltrán, palpitatingly, "is he still living?"

"That I do not know. He lived with his Uncle Marcos until he was about fifteen, at least he lived at his farm, for the uncle died and shortly after the boy went off, and I hear none has seen him since. Pilar will not allow his name to be mentioned, we are told, and is in a rage if one attempts to question."

"Why did you not tell me that he had been in the neighborhood?" Mrs. Beltrán turned reproachfully to Doña Benilda.

"Ah, my dear, because I could tell you so little. I thought best to let Prudencia give you such information as she had, and hoped she might have more to add to it since we talked the matter over. I did not want to raise your hopes but to have you disappointed."

"You have no idea where he went?" Mrs. Bertrán turned again to Doña Prudencia.

"We do not know whether he has left the country or has gone to some large city. We cannot tell. *Ay de mi!* It is so sad. I wish I had known of you; I wish I had known. I hoped when the boy was grown that we could be friends in spite of the bitter feeling which Uncle Marcos and Pilar always had for us all. There has been no intercourse between the families for years."

Such an expression of grief and hopelessness overspread her mother's face as Anita could not stand. She threw herself into her arms exclaiming. "We will

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not give up, mother; we will not. We know now that he was here, that he reached Spain, and that is more than we could gather anywhere else. It will not be more wonderful to find him than it was to find me. We have a clue. Do you realize that we have a clue?" She turned to her cousins and spoke in her broken Spanish. "You will help us; you all will help us to find him, I know."

Tears filled the eyes of the sympathetic company. "Ay, ay," again sighed Doña Prudencia, "we will help all we can."

"I will make a vow to St. Joseph," declared Amparo, going over and taking Anita's hand. "If he will but find my Cousin Pepé, for a year I will wear no ornaments."

"And I," spoke up Rodrigo, "will not be outdone by my little Cousin Amparo. "I will promise the good St. Joseph not to smoke cigarettes for a week."

"Ay!" cried his mother, in a surprised tone, "that is a great deal for you to promise, my son, a great sacrifice."

"Not too great if it mean a help to Cousin Catalina and her fair daughter," he responded gallantly. "I will make it a month, if necessary. Adios, cigarillos!" He blew a kiss from the tips of his fingers. "Adios, for a week, a month."

"Good children," approved Doña Prudencia, patting her daughter's hand. For a little *niña* as fond

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as you are of ornaments it is a good spirit you show, you and Rodrigo also."

They sat volubly discussing plans, one offering this suggestion another that, till finally Doña Prudencia proposed that they should make an attempt to see this Pilar, the widow of their Uncle Marcos. "She may not be willing to give us any satisfaction; it would be like her to refuse to receive us, but it will do no harm to try," she said. "I have not crossed the threshold of her house since my uncle's death. I have felt always that it was she who stirred up discord, that it was she who kept my uncle from a reconciliation, that it was her harsh treatment which sent the boy away. I should forgive, perhaps, but my father was cheated out of much that was rightfully his, and it is hard not to bear resentment, yet I will go with you, my cousin."

"I could not ask so much of you," declared Mrs. Beltrán. "We will go alone if some one will direct us."

"Why should either thing be necessary?" spoke up Amparo. "To-morrow is the *fiesta* of Carmen. That Pilar will be there. She goes each year. Why can we not all go to this *fiesta?*"

"A good thought, my child," cried Doña Prudencia. Thy little head is a wise one. At a *fiesta* she cannot well run away from us, and we can force an interview which elsewhere she might be able to avoid. We will do this thing. You understand that you are all to remain with us."

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"But so many of us there are," protested Doña Benilda, but Doña Prudencia would listen to no excuse, and finally it was arranged to the satisfaction of all.

Amparo and Rodrigo took Anita off into the garden while the others sat in solemn conference. It was still light enough to see a glow upon the hills and lingering color in the sky. Amparo piloted her new cousin all over the place, showed her the orio where corn was stored, the pigeons so tame they would eat from her hand, the pet lamb and the prideful pig. She gathered *brevas* for her from the fig tree, tucked a *clavel* in her dark hair and begged that she would allow herself to be dressed in Spanish costume for the *fiesta*. "I shall wear my peasant dress, *aldeana* we call it, and you can wear my *manton de Manila* which will be vastly becoming, do you not think so, Rodrigo?"

Of course Rodrigo must agree, and say that he would be the envy of all with two such lovely maidens to escort.

"And we must teach her the *jota*, Rodrigo," Amparo went on. It will never do for her not to dance. I should be disconsolate to see her stand aside while others danced."

"There is no time like the present," returned Rodrigo.

So on the smoothly paved *patio* they began the pretty dance which necessitated much snapping of fingers, agile twirlings and graceful steps. Anita, a

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willing pupil, did her best, was applauded and encouraged till she promised to join the dancers the following day.

"Rodrigo will be your partner and will see that you make no mistakes," Amparo reassured her by saying.

They danced till the little maid ran out to bid them *"A comer"* and then they went in. It was nine o'clock and the stars were shining.

The evening meal over Amparo insisted that Anita must choose the *manton de Manila* which she would use upon the morrow. "There are two, you see," she confided to her new cousin; "one is my mother's and one is mine." She produced the two shawls from a huge old chest in which they were carefully laid away in blue paper, and spread them out upon the bed. "Now choose," she said.

The pale yellow silk shawl, magnificently embroidered in colors fascinated Anita, but she decided on the other, a white one whose embroidery was quite as good and whose thick fringe was even longer. "You see I have not yet left off my mourning," she said, "and I think the white will look more appropriate. It would seem so very dashing to suddenly parade around in that lovely butterfly thing."

Amparo laughed partly at the broken Spanish, partly because she was happy. She displayed her own costume next; a short crimson skirt trimmed with

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bands of black velvet, a bodice of black velvet edged with a tinsel braid, a jacket which was worn either picturesquely disposed around the waist or in the usual manner, and a large silk handkerchief arranged in the manner peculiar to the country. Amparo put them all on that Anita might see how they were worn and added long earrings which almost reached her shoulders, and a handsome chain on which was suspended a medal of Our Lady of Carmen, "I shall wear my ornaments to-morrow to the *fiesta*," she told Anita, "and will begin my vow the next day. One should wear ornaments with this costume, you know." Then she made Anita put on the pretty peasant dress, which Anita was only too glad to do, and they enjoyed the dressing up, as girls do, laughing and chattering till bedtime.

"Such a wonderful day as it has been, madre," said Anita as she stood before a large mirror brushing her short locks, "and to-morrow it will be even more wonderful. I am going to be a real Spanish girl and can dance the *jota* with Rodrigo. He is really very nice when you come to know him better, so kind and polite. I do not find him so queer looking either, now that I am used to him. He looks like his father, Amparo told me, and when I asked her why Cousin Benilda married such an odd-looking man she said he had everything but good looks and one could do without those. She is a very wise little person. I like her,

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and Cousin Prudencia is a dear. I thought her very cold and distant at first, didn't you?"

"Not so much so as I expected. She was exquisitely polite, but then Spaniards are so. They sometimes seem very proud and austere, but they have a frank sort of conceit which is really childish."

Anita laughed. "I have noticed that in Rodrigo and it is very amusing. I think, madre, it would have been fine if we could have discovered Pepé right here, for then we could have stayed on indefinitely."

"Do you like it so much, dear?"

"Oh, so much. I really love it. I believe I should like to live here. If we find Pepé shall we come back, do you think?"

"I don't know, darling. It is all so vague, so uncertain; who can tell? We shall, of course, go wherever our search leads us."

"I should not mind seeing other large cities in Spain, but I should like to come back, too. One can live very cheaply. Rodrigo pointed out nice little houses with gardens and all sorts of things which could be rented for forty dollars a year. Think of that. A maid who could cook well might be had for five or six dollars a month he told me. Imagine how wonderfully we could get along on our income."

Mrs. Beltrán smiled at the girl's enthusiasm. "You haven't seen the home of your mother's people," she

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said. "One can live cheaply in England, too, if one knows how."

"But this is so unique, so unlike any other place, and England is more like our own country."

"Don't you like your own country?"

"Oh, yes, I do, but variety is pleasant. Is it my own country, by the way? I was born in Mexico of English and Spanish parents, was educated in the United States, and here I am neither one thing nor another."

"When you marry you will be of the same nationality as your husband; that is the law."

"Oh, is it? How strange. Are you a Spaniard, then?"

"No, a widow has a right to resume her own nationality if she makes the claim within a year, so I became an English woman."

"I see. Madre, that curate, that Mr. Kirkby, has he ever married?"

"No, he is living in a town, a little village rather, not far from my native home. He has a very good living now, is rector and is greatly beloved by his people."

"How faithful some men are," sighed Anita. "I suppose he has never forgotten you."

"No, he has not forgotten me, but long ago we accepted our relationship upon the basis of a warm

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friendship. There is no romance there, Anita dear, so don't be building up one."

"Tell me something about your old home."

"It is the county of Sussex, as you know, a quiet little place. Our home was only a small cottage, but oh, what a garden we had! You would love the downs and in the spring you would see such flocks of sheep and lambs, primroses on all the banks, and hedgerows white with May. You would like the little river Arun, running so swiftly to the sea, and fine old Arundel Castle, the seat of the Duke of Norfolk. It has a wonderful park. Oh, yes, there is much to see in Sussex."

"You make me want to go there," declared Anita, going over and leaning on the back of her mother's chair. "When we find Pepé we three can go there and stay for a while. Have you many relatives, madre?"

"Only a very few, distant cousins, and an aunt who is now quite old—but they do not live in the town I spoke of; they live, some of them, in London, some of them in other places."

"Well, we shall have to go and hunt them up when we have found Pepé."

"Perhaps by that time you will be glad to go back to your old home."

"I might be glad under certain circumstances," replied Anita with a sigh. Then throwing something

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[illegible] "Here are you, Pepe!" she whispered. "Will it make any difference to you if you will know that I am near? Have you forgotten? Here are you, Pepe! And in a message or a wave of thought so we may not entirely lose you. Terence, my darling, would I not give you back gladly if it might be with you?"

The night wind bore the whisper on to the murmuring leaves and blended it with the plaint of the sea, and at that moment a young man rose from his place in a Paris café, left his coffee untouched and went out into the glitter and rumble of the streets, hearing in fancy the unforgotten sound of a girl's voice, seeing only the warm light in her luminous eyes.

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CHAPTER VIII

At a Fiesta

Rocket bombs were going up, drums were beating, tambourines jangling when Doña Prudencia's party arrived at the old church. Mass was over and those bearing the sacred image of Our Lady of Carmen were coming out of the church, keeping up their monotonous chant as they followed with rhythmic step the richly-robed priests. After the image-bearers came a procession of worshipers carrying tall lighted candles. The late arrivals stood to one side to allow the procession to pass.

"There she is," whispered Amparo, as a tall, black-robed woman with severe features, went by, "I knew she would be here. We must wait now till the service is over."

"She is a person of opinions, this Pilar," remarked Rodrigo. "You remember, Amparo, how she closed her house, would not have a light, nor open her doors to her friends when was the *fiesta* of San Roque."

"But why?" asked Anita in wonder.

"Because she does not like this poor San Roque; she prefers the Santa Magdelena. She is jealous for this favorite saint of hers, and does not like that there are superior attractions at the *fiesta* of San Roque."

"She is not alone in that," Amparo asserted.

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"There are others as foolish, who close their houses so that a twinkle of light appears at night, and who complain of the dancing and the merriment which keeps up so late."

"But what has poor San Roque done to her. I thought him a very amiable saint," said Anita.

"He is all that," returned Rodrigo. "It is but a prejudice, a jealous prejudice. You will see why this is so when you talk to this Pilar. She is one who will not yield an opinion once it is lodged in that narrow mind of hers."

They stood watching the procession wind around the church which had stood for ten centuries looking over the sea, had witnessed the union of Leon and Castile, the birth of the Cid, the expulsion of the Moors, its gray walls enshrining many a memory, viewing many such a *fiesta*.

"This northern Spain does not change as other places," Rodrigo continued. "Here we keep the old customs. This religious dance which you behold is so old that it is called the *danza prima*—the first dance. One cannot say where it first originated. There are others, too, which are handed down from generation to generation and are taught by one who has learned it from some ancient who, in turn, has been taught by his predecessor. Oh, yes, my cousin, Spain has a history. She is old, very old."

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"You will like to look at the inside of the church, perhaps," said Amparo, "so ancient it is."

They went in to see a low, dark interior whose antique beams were blackened by time, whose gallery showed grotesque gargoyles, whose chancel displayed carven figures which might have found their origin in some heathen temple. It was almost deserted, though candles still blazed at the altars and a few kneeling figures bowed before certain favorite shrines. A small balcony, screened from the too prying eye, was reached from the old monastery and was set apart in the old days for the use of the nuns whose convent once was near.

Out again into the sparkling air to see the end of the ceremonies and then to find a nook among the rocks close to the sea where they could eat their picnic luncheon unmolested. Others from a distance were doing the same, and not far off sat Pilar with two friends.

"We will go and speak to her presently," whispered Doña Benilda to Mrs. Beltrán. "Perhaps it would be best that I go alone. What do you think, Prudencia?"

"It would be better," Doña Prudencia agreed. "Pilar is not an approachable person. Explanations should come before Catalina is made known to her, and it will be better that you should speak than that I should, for Pilar has no love for me."

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Doña Benilda gathered her enveloping veil around her and walked over to where Pilar was seated. The others, looking on interestedly, observed that an animated conversation was taking place. Each gesticulated magnificently; voices rose excitedly.

"Are they quarreling?" whispered Anita to Rodrigo.

"No; they discuss, argue; that is all."

"It sounds as if they meant to tear each other to pieces," Anita turned to her mother.

"They are only excited, I think," Mrs. Beltrán decided.

At last, with a parting gesture, Doña Benilda closed the conference and returned saying: "It is as you prophesied, Prudencia; she is a difficult person. I had to use all my arguments to prove that our Cousin Catalina was not the wicked woman she supposed her to be. She now, though half-heartedly, consents to speak to her."

"I do not care how half-heartedly she looks upon me," said Mrs. Beltrán, rising, "if she but gives me news of my boy."

Anita, divided between a desire to hear what her uncle's widow had to tell, and a dread of encountering disagreeable remarks, hung back for a moment, but suddenly decided that she would not be a coward and ran forward to join her mother.

Silent and unyielding as the rock upon which she

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stood, Doña Pilar awaited them, greeted them distantly when they were presented, yet viewed them with curiosity. She did not take the initiative, but waited for Mrs. Beltrán to make her inquiries.

"I have been told," Mrs. Beltrán began, "that my son spent some years with you. I wish to thank you for your care of him."

There was no responsive interest in Pilar's expression. "I gave him care, yes, I will not deny that. A young child is troublesome, a boy especially."

"I can understand that." Mrs. Beltrán was determined to be conciliatory. She yearned to learn all that could be told. "I hope he did not give you needless trouble," she said, "and that he was able to assist you."

"He was beginning to be a little useful, the ungrateful wretch, when he took it into his head to run away. What an ingrate! A good home during all those years of a child's most irritating and careless behavior, then when he could have earned his keep he must needs leave to better himself. To better himself! *Hombre!* Was not a good home, a comfortable bed, enough food sufficient for him? Was he the son of a nobleman that he must pine for richer fare? *Ave Maria,* what did he expect? I venture to say that many a night have his bones ached for his good bed, and he has wished for the *guiso* he scorned, for a roof to cover

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him. But he need not return; he knows that for I told him so."

"Then you knew he was going. Did you know where?" asked Mrs. Beltrán eagerly.

"He had hinted more than once that some day he would leave, when he complained of his work, the lazy *bobo,* of his prospects. Was he son of mine that I should promise him fields and crops? *Que bobo!* If you go you do not return, was what I said. So he has gone and he knows better than to return. No grief to me is that."

"You do not know where he went?" Mrs. Beltrán queried, finding it hard to restrain her indignation.

"Not I, unless to the city. It is along that road all triflers travel."

"The city? But what city?"

"How should I know? He has chosen his road. I did not choose it for him. Like a *mono* he imitates those who believe they will make their fortunes. He may have gone to America, who knows?"

"Have you any reason to think that?" asked Mrs. Beltrán, anxiously. Pilar gave a short sardonic laugh. He has seen Americanos strutting around in their store clothes, their gold chains across their stomachs, their strange and ugly hats upon their heads. It would be just like him to admire such. He was always one to be discontented with simple things. 'Why should I cut hay all my life? Why should I lead the cow cart?

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Why should I tend a *burro?' Borrico* himself and well suited to herd with *burros.*" She seemed to take bitter satisfaction in pouring forth her spite and scorn upon the mother and sister of the boy and no appeal affected her.

So at last the three returned to Doña Prudencia. In such a rage was Doña Benilda that her voice shook as she cried passionately: "It is the last time that I address myself to that piece of stone, Prudencia. Ay! Ay! she is worse; she is a hyena, a tigress to so tear the heart of a mourning mother, to give her no word of comfort. But," she turned to Mrs. Beltrán, "we will not give up, my cousin, we will the more apply ourselves to seeking information, the more will we pray to Our Lady of Pity to help you."

"Ah," sighed Doña Prudencia, "I feared you would learn little from that frozen piece of flesh. I feared to set my hopes upon any interview with her, but there must be some one who knew the child, some one to whom he talked of his plans. We shall make inquiries in the *pueblo* of my Uncle Marcos."

"I shall make it my duty to go there myself," exclaimed Rodrigo. "I shall leave no stone unturned. Ah, she has *el diablo en el cuerpo,* that Pilar. I wish we might show her the contempt we feel."

"I shall wear no ornaments. If needs be I will promise to leave them off longer." Amparo's earnest

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little voice spoke up while she leaned over and patted Anita's hand.

"So grieved we are that you should encounter such rudeness in one of our compatriots," said Doña Prudencia, "but she is a low creature. Her mother was but a *criada* in the house of my grandfather and what can you expect? She has a head of wood and a heart of marble. She is nothing but a piece of furniture, not a woman at all." With these and other remarks did they try to console Mrs. Beltrán and Anita.

"How good you all are," exclaimed the latter. "And you, Rodrigo, I am sure you will find out something at the village. It is a happy thought to seek others more communicative than this disagreeable Pilar."

At the sound of drums, violins and tambourines, Amparo sprang to her feet. "The dance!" she cried. "Come, Anita; come, Rodrigo. It is the music of the *jota* that we hear. I must not miss a partner. You, Rodrigo, will dance with Anita."

It was with some misgivings that Anita took her place opposite Rodrigo in the long line. Amparo in her pretty peasant dress stood next her, having for her partner a graceful young countryman who danced like an angel, so Amparo whispered. "It is as it should be," she continued, "for Angel is his name." With Rodrigo to pilot her through in safety on the one side and Amparo to support her on the other, Anita managed fairly

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well. The lilt of the music crept into her blood and she finally was able to respond to it with the grace and enthusiasm of a true Spanish girl. Her eyes were shining, her lips and cheeks bright with color when the last strain died away.

"Ah, my cousin, you show your Spanish blood," said Rodrigo. "You love the dance, yes?"

"Oh, I do, I do, and I shall expect to do better each time. Will they have the *jota* again?"

"Oh, yes, again, and more than once. See now, this another not so pretty dance. Will you try it?"

But Anita did not care to join in the uninteresting and rather monotonous dance, a few shuffling steps and a circling around, repeated and repeated. "It is not graceful like the other," she commented.

"Perhaps no," responded Rodrigo, "but after the so great exercise of *jota* is a restfulness. Let us make a walk and see what is go on while the dance continue."

They wandered about among the groups of people now thronging the grounds. The train had brought a large addition to the numbers, and automobiles brought more. Pitiful looking beggars, lame, halt, blind, deformed, crawled up to them to ask for alms. Gypsies waylaid them promising a good fortune. Dealers in cakes, in nuts, in sweet insipid drinks, offered their wares. Gallegos trolled forth their songs. Melancholy ballad singers wailed out doleful stanzas about tombstones, sepulchres and ghostly apparitions.

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It was all very novel, very interesting to the American-bred girl, who, in her *manton de Manila* looked her part of a Spanish maiden.

Rodrigo, anxious to show attention, brought up one after another of his acquaintances. Amparo, eager to display hospitality, presented her young friends who claimed the new found cousin as their own countrywoman and made much of her.

It was a young *aldeano* who seemed most attracted to the American girl, "Inglesa," he called her. "She reminds me somewhat of one I knew," he said in an aside to Rodrigo, and the name is the same. Perhaps it is that it is a Beltrán family resemblance."

"Ah-h," cried Rodrigo. "Who, Anselmo, is this of whom you speak?"

"A lad of my pueblo, Pepé Beltrán he was. *Ay de mi,* the poor Pepé. It is long since I saw him. We were friends, yes, we were good friends."

"Pepé Beltrán, did you say?"

"The same."

"And where is he?"

"At the present moment I do not know. *Pobrecito!* He is gone, departed from Piñeres."

"With whom did he live? His parents?" Rodrigo questioned excitedly.

"No, with his Uncle Marcos, now dead. It was when the uncle died that no longer could be sustained the slave life of the boy. Never a *fiesta* for Pepé,

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never a holiday. The work of two men for a lad of fifteen. It was beyond endurance and none blamed him for going elsewhere to seek his fortune."

Rodrigo turned hurriedly to Anita, who was talking to one of Amparo's friends. "Here is one who knew the brother of you. Come, come, we will take him to the mother. He knew, yes, yes, he knew Pepé."

Anita sprang forward and grasped Anselmo's arm. "You knew my brother? How wonderful! Come, come quickly to my mother."

They hastened the young man along to where Mrs. Beltrán was sitting with Doña Prudencia, watching the crowds. Doña Benilda had gone off to chat with some friends she had caught sight of.

"Mother, mother," cried Anita, "here is some one who knew Pepé. Think of it! he knew Pepé; he was his good friend. Oh, ask him, ask him where he is. Let him tell you all he knows. This is my mother and Pepé's, señor."

"It is our good friend Anselmo Ortega, cousin," said Rodrigo. "He is of Piñeres, the *pueblo* where lived our uncle Marcos, and he has known your son."

Mrs. Beltrán clasped her hands beseechingly. "Tell me, señor," she said earnestly, "do you know where my boy has gone? Oh, this is wonderful."

"He went to Barcelona," replied Anselmo, "but I cannot tell whether he is there now or not. Once,

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go, so if you hear I have gone you will know why; you will know that I cannot live without my violin. It is my comfort, my friend. I should die of unhappiness, deprived of it.' "

Mrs. Beltrán sat with clenched hands, her lips quivering while Anita wept openly. " Car-r-ramba," growled Rodrigo, " but she is a *malvada,* an old *bruja.* Continue, Anselmo."

" Then," Anselmo went on, " he said, ' You have been kinder to me than anyone else, Anselmo.' Pardon me, señora for telling you this," Anselmo interrupted himself, " I but wish to explain why I know what others may not. Few ever saw Pepé after his uncle's death, for he was not permitted recreations. It was work for him from morn till night. The widow of Don Marcos was twice as grasping as her husband and would consent to nothing which lightened labor or encouraged idleness. However, I would manage to seek out Pepé, for I found him very *simpatico,* and we would talk of those things which boys like, of the world outside, of our hopes and ambitions. ' So, I go,' he said, ' to-night, I think. I go to Barcelona, for it is there I shall find my best chance for work of a kind to advance me. I shall get there somehow, and my violin will earn me food by the way.' "

"And did he expect to walk all the way? " inquired Anita solicitously.

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"Perhaps not all the way; he expected to encounter travellers who would give him a lift in one way or another," Anselmo told her. "You will write to me, Pepé, I said, and I do not blame you for going. Perhaps some day I shall go to Barcelona myself and then we may meet again."

"And you say he did write several times?" Mrs. Beltrán questioned.

"He wrote, but cautiously. He had been a long time on the way, but had arrived at last, had been helped over the worst part of the road by more than one *viajante,* had played in the villages, had slept in the hay, had sometimes fared badly, sometimes well, but there he was and looking for work."

"Did he find it?" queried Anita.

"In time he found a place which paid him little, yet enough to keep him from starvation," he wrote, and in time he expected to do better; in fact he did."

"He gave his address?" Mrs. Beltrán inquired agitatedly.

"I have it, señora; I will send it to you, but it is now three years, I must remind you."

"No matter, no matter," it is the strongest clue we have yet had. We may find him there, or at least may discover where he has gone. It is a step, it is many steps nearer than we have yet been able to go. I cannot thank you enough, señor. A mother's blessing go with you."

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"The pleasure is mine," responded Anselmo. "I place myself at your feet, señora."

"Oh, mother! Oh, mother!" panted Anita, her breath coming and going so quickly that she could hardly speak. "To think we have been able to follow his life up to within three years of the present. So near, so near. Oh, we shall find him. I know we shall."

Her mother seized her hand and held it tightly. "I cannot wait. To-morrow we start for Barcelona," she said with decision.

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CHAPTER IX

In Barcelona

In spite of Amparo's pleadings and Doña Prudencia's urgings that they extend their stay at least another week, nothing would deter Mrs. Beltrán from starting at once for Barcelona. "You are a mother," she said to Doña Prudencia; "you know my heart yearns to find my child. I cannot wait. We might miss him by a day, an hour. No, no, I must go on."

"But you will return," begged Amparo; "say you will return. After your journeyings you will need a rest."

"Our home is yours," Doña Prudencia told Mrs. Beltrán. "I beg that you, your son and your daughter will remain with us so long as it may please you. I do not urge you further at present, but I say return."

Doña Benilda and Rodrigo, no less hospitably inclined, at last insisted upon accompanying their cousins part way upon the journey, and they left the little village of Cuesta with good wishes following them. "*Hasta luego! Hasta que vuelva! Adios! Voy ustedes con Dios!*" were the last words they heard as they set out upon their walk back to the little city. From thence they were to return to their inn to pack. Anselmo was prompt in sending the address he prom-

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ised, and the next day they set their faces toward Barcelona. As far as Santander would Doña Benilda and Rodrigo see them, and then on alone to Barcelona, through wild mountain scenery, up steep grades, down into picturesque valleys, across mountain torrents, glimpses of blue sea on one side, mighty peaks crowned with ancient churches or monasteries on the other. A different Spain indeed from that of Madrid's brown Castilian plains, more exciting, more impressive, Anita thought it.

"Shall we find him? Shall we come back?" were the questions which constantly presented themselves as they sped on. There were long silences between the mother and daughter during the hours they were shut in a railway compartment alone. There was so much to wonder at in the outside world through which they were passing, so much to remember, so much meat for introspection, that the time passed rapidly. "It seems incredible that we should have learned to love those dear cousins so well in such a short time. Were ever such hospitable and truly kind people? Don't you love them?" said Anita as they turned from waving adieux to Doña Benilda and Rodrigo.

"I do indeed love them," replied her mother. "My own sisters could not have shown greater kindness than Benilda and Prudencia."

"One thing puzzles me," Anita spoke after a pause, during which she was watching from the window to

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see if she could catch another glimpse of a tenth-century church perched high on a mountain peak.

"And what is that?" inquired her mother.

"Why did Pilar—it was she of course—why did she write you that she knew nothing of a Pepé Beltrán from America? That was a number of years ago, wasn't it? Before he could have been of much assistance? Why should she not have been willing to give him up?"

"It could not have been more than five years ago that I wrote. It was only then that I gave up hope of finding him and my husband in America. It is evident from what we know of Pilar, that she clung tenaciously to her belief that I had wantonly left my home, and that she was not disposed to give the slightest information which might lead to restoring my children to me."

"Dear madre," Anita lifted her mother's hand and kissed it. "How could anyone who ever knew you believe that you would be so heartless? Do you think my father really believed you had actually deserted him and us?"

"Not exactly. I cannot believe he thought that much evil of me, but he probably did really think that I cared no more for him, that I pined for my own country, my people, even for the companionship of my old sweetheart. In his pitiful jealousy he wanted to punish me. Oh, I don't know, I don't know. I

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scarcely can believe he had any other design. He was wild in his imaginings, would get worked up into a frenzy of suspicion against others beside myself. He was never what one might call a well-balanced person, and at that time was surely not normal. Jealousy makes one abnormal for the time being."

"That wicked Pilar! If she had but told you the truth, you would have come right here. You would have found Pepé long ago."

"And have missed finding my daughter."

"Oh, mother, yes, that is a dreadful thought. I wonder if it is wrong to be glad you found me first."

"My darling, of course not. You must remember that my finding you led the way for further discovery, led us to this search for Pepé. You furnished information. You have inspired me with confidence. Your steadfast belief that we shall find him has given me fresh courage."

"And now, and now," cried Anita exultantly, "we are on our way to him. Don't you feel that we are?"

"I do have fuller faith than ever before, dear daughter. My baby boy! He is a grown man, Anita, twenty-one by now. I wonder if he has been taught to hate me."

"If he has, he will soon do the opposite," returned Anita staunchly. "Let me but get hold of him, and he will soon understand. Oh, you precious darling." She flung herself on her mother with ardent caresses.

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"It hurts me, it always hurts me to think of what you have suffered so unjustly. Is there no end to suffering in this life?"

"No end," replied her mother gravely. "We are saved through suffering. That is its lesson. And great joy and peace comes from endurance, from strength acquired."

Anita sighed. From her youthful outlook it was hard to realize that suffering could be else than an evil. She changed the subject. "Do you know where we are to stop in Barcelona?"

"I have the address of a good and quiet boarding place which that good Benilda procured for me from one of her friends. It is not in the heart of the city but in one of the suburbs, is quite Spanish and not high priced. If we need to be in the city for any length of time it will be a safe and comfortable harborage, for from there we can pursue our investigations, and feel that we are not at undue expense."

"Suppose we find Pepé at once, that same day?"

Mrs. Beltrán covered her eyes. "Somehow I cannot believe we shall. It would be almost too dazzling a prospect."

Again Anita was quiet for some time while she gazed out of the car window at the changing scene. After a while she turned around again. "I have been thinking that it would be dreadful to be disappointed

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in Pepé. He didn't have very refined associations, did he, there at uncle's?"

"Don Marcos must have been a man of some refinement," replied Mrs. Beltrán thoughtfully. "He came of good stock, not of the nobility, but of good substantial people, land owners and people of education who had their coat of arms and who held themselves proudly. His wife, no. She came of the poorer peasantry. You know they told us that her mother was a servant in your great grandfather's house. I do not care, however, what my boy may be so long as he is good and honorable. He is young enough to learn polish, but character is a thing which must have good stuff to start with."

"Anselmo, that nice Anselmo, is very gentlemanly. All those I met were the same. They were all well mannered, so probably Pepé will not be less so. Do you suppose he is just a common workman, mother?"

"Probably he is. He has had no training for anything else."

Anita sighed. Brought up as she had been she could but look down upon the laboring man. It was another shock to her this idea of a coarse-mannered, hard-handed workman for a brother. She would like him to be a distinguished *caballero;* in fact she had always pictured him as a proud, fine-looking person. She followed out her thought in her next remark: "Just think, mother, we don't know in the least what

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he looks like, whether he is tall or short, whether he has bushy curly hair like Rodrigo's or reddish locks like Anselmo's. We might meet him face to face and never know him."

"That is one of the sad things about it. He was rather a fair child, blue-eyed and with light brown hair, but his hair may be dark by now, his father's was. He was fairly tall for his age, Anselmo said, but he has probably grown in the five years since they met."

"Was my father one of these little scraps of men like so many we have seen?"

"No, he was rather a good height."

"And you are not short. He will probably be tall, then, with blue eyes." Anita was trying to visualize him, but gave it up. She could not adapt him to any special type.

The train sped on, winding around incredible heights, rushing through a limitless number of tunnels. All day they were travelling to reach Zaragoza at night.

"And he walked all the way," quavered Mrs. Beltrán, as she looked from the window of their small hotel. "Poor, weary little lad. Oh, Anita, we must find him. We must make up to him for all the love he had missed, for all the loneliness of his childhood." She dropped down upon a chair weeping, but checked herself almost immediately. "Forgive me, dear," she

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said, wiping her eyes. "I do not often give way, do I? but all day long, each mile of the way I have followed my boy's poor tired feet, toiling on so bravely day after day to finally reach—what? Oh, daughter, it is harder to bear now that he has become so much more of a reality. I used to see him as a baby boy; now he appears a tired, hopeless, homeless lad thrust out by unkindness into the world to fight his way alone."

"Oh, mother dear, mother dear," said Anita caressingly, "don't, don't feel that way. You are all tired out with the long journey, and it seems more to you than it should. You remember that Anselmo told us that he had many lifts by the way, and he was not so tired, perhaps as you believe. Remember that we have better reason to think we shall find him than ever before. To-morrow, it is probable that we shall be in the same city."

"For that very reason I am so fearful, so near and then to miss him; to come so far and then not find him!"

The possibility of this had not missed consideration by Anita but she did not say so. "Well, madre," she tried to comfort, "suppose he is not to be found at the very first, there will be much better chance in Barcelona than anywhere else, and we need not be discouraged even if we have to spend weeks or months hunting him up."

"I realize that." Mrs. Beltrán wiped her eyes. "I

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must buckle on my armor and not be such a lackadaisical mother. I am ashamed of myself."

"You are always so strong and calm," Anita returned, "that it is a pity if you cannot be allowed to indulge yourself in a few tears once in a while."

This way of putting it amused Mrs. Beltrán and she laughed. "Well, dear, that is one way of curing me of my doldrums. Come, we must freshen up a bit and get something to eat, then we shall feel more fit. What a wonderful old town this is. We must get out and see what we can of it while we have the chance."

But even the ancient cathedral of La Seo and the marvels of the Virgen del Pilar did not serve to detain them beyond the next morning which saw them on the final stage of their journey to Barcelona, and by night they were established in a modest pension away from the rush and welter of the city, and in the pretty suburb of Le Gracia.

Even the excitement, the suspense, the expectation arising from the thought of why they had come did not prevent Anita from taking note of those whom she met at the evening meal. A half dozen or so, of boarders were all there were. Her vis-a-vis was an art student, American, of uncertain age, rather attractive if she had been clean, apparently something of a poseur, and very confident of herself. A young Russian, with tense face and deep-set eyes, looking as if

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he might be an anarchist, sat next. On the other side of the American was a young Spanish student at the University. He had fine eyes which he used upon all occasions especially on the art student. Two ladies who were once young, and who bravely made desperate efforts to keep up the delusion that they were still youthful, were next in order. Their name was Perley, and were plainly American from one of the New England states. A man and his wife, of whom Anita could not get a good view, because they sat at her side the table, completed the number at table. Anita wondered how long she would be in daily contact with these persons; if she would ever come to know any of them well and if so which it would be. The girl was disposed to be friendly. The Perley sisters were feverishly gay in their effort to appear enthusiastic. The Russian glowered. The Spanish student cast languishing glances. Anita thought them all rather amusing. The meal was good, though simple. Their hostess, a bright-eyed, stout little woman, evidently superintended the cooking herself, and was anxious to please. The house was attractively set in a garden with views of mountains right and left, villages dropped in between the green, and a nearer outlook upon the villas of the suburb.

"I think we shall like it," Anita said, looking out from the window of their room upon the lights of the city. There was more life in this place than in

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the pastoral villages they had just left. As she listened to the distant rumble, saw the stacks of various factories belching forth columns of smoke, or sending up a sudden glare from inward fires, she felt that here life's issues loomed bigger, problems appeared vaster, hopes more illusive. She had less certainty about attaining the ends for which they had come. The future seemed a vague and shimmering thing whose outlines eluded her perceptions.

However she awoke the next morning confident of purpose as was the shining day and went forth with her mother feeling all the excitement of an adventure.

Leaving pleasant Gracia they set their faces toward the old town in one of whose tortuous streets they hoped to find some news of Pepé.. Through the squalor and dirt of a winding lane-like course they picked their way, passing groups of men whose evil eyes looked after them, raising the curiosity of children who paused for a moment in their rope skipping to the monotonous measure of *"Arroz, con leche, con canela, con limon,"* or who, dancing with fervid abandon to the wheezing of a hand organ, suddenly glanced up from under dark lashes at the strangers.

At last they stopped palpitatingly before one of the meaner of the mean houses in this ancient part of the town whose narrow twisting streets housed the poorer classes. " Poor little lad, poor little lad," murmured

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Mrs. Beltrán, looking around and gathering her skirt from contact with the door before she knocked.

A slattern, over-stout woman came to the door, but she knew no such person as Pepé Beltrán, and her dialect was so unfamiliar to the two inquirers that it was some time before they could make out what she said. Mrs. Beltrán suggested that some one else in the house might know of a Pepé or José Beltrán and finally the woman moved off clumsily, though whether to take a message or not they could not be sure.

"What language is it she speaks?" whispered Anita, as the woman moved away. "Surely it isn't Spanish."

"It is Catalan. It is the language most spoken here you will soon learn, and is quite different from the Castilian."

"I shall never want to learn it," Anita said with conviction. "I certainly am glad that Benilda sent us to some one who speaks pure Spanish."

"That is one reason, the chief one, why she did send us to Doña Carmen. She is an Asturian, though doubtless she speaks this dialect too."

They heard the stout woman's voice trailing along the stairway. "Emilia! Emilia," and presently they heard heels clicking down the stair. A younger woman appeared before them.

"We are looking for a young man called Pepé, or José Beltrán," began Mrs. Beltrán.

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The woman looked at her stolidly.

"Can you tell us if a young man by that name lives now in this house or has ever lived here?"

"I have not lived in this house very long," the woman at last replied. "There was one who lately moved away who lived many years here she told me, but I," she shook her head, "No, I do not know such person."

"Where has the woman gone who did live here so long?" asked Mrs. Beltrán.

"I think she moved up the street. Wait, I ask." She clattered out to the street, looked up and down, then called shrilly: "Faquita, Faquita!" A woman standing in a group turned her head, then walked slowly toward her who summoned. After a few moments of rapid conversation Faquita returned with the woman called Emilia. She paused to look the strangers over, but was perfectly silent till addressed.

Mrs. Beltrán repeated her questions.

"A *joven, muy joven?*" inquired Faquita.

"Yes, a mere lad," Mrs. Beltrán assured her.

Faquita seemed trying to remember. "There was one such here. He worked in one of the factories. The others called him José. Perhaps he might be the one for whom you look."

"Ask her if he had a violin," said Anita eagerly.

"Did he have a violin? Did he play upon it?" Mrs. Beltrán scanned the woman's face eagerly.

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"A sudden look of intelligence passed over it. "Ah, *si, señora?* I remember. It is he. He played the violin. He would play; we would dance. I remember. But he is no longer living here."

"Do you know where he went?"

"I cannot say. There are many changes in three years."

"Do you remember where he worked?"

The woman shook her head. "In one of the factories. I cannot say which one."

"But do you not know who his companions were? Are none of them here?"

"I do not know, señora. They come and go; one cannot tell where they go or where they come from. He played the violin, yes, he played. He was a very quiet lad, and sad, not merry like some. He played, he worked in a factory. He has gone." She made a large gesture as if to dismiss the subject. She could tell no more.

But Mrs. Beltrán was insistent. "Can you not tell me how long ago it was that he left?" she asked.

The woman tried to think. "I cannot say exactly. So much goes on. One cannot keep track of time."

"One year? Was he here one year ago?"

Faquita shook her head. "No, not then."

"Two? Three?"

"Three years, yes, but not two, for two years ago, my man was hurt and he was not here then, for

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if he had been I should have asked him to come and play his violin to ease my man. So impatient he was and always hard to amuse. Yes, I would have had José and his violin." And this was the last word, so after thanking the two women and leaving them staring curiously, the mother and daughter wound their way back to where the cathedral invited an entrance. They went in and sat down on a bench near the door, both thoughtful and subdued.

"We didn't gain much, did we mother?" said Anita."

"Not much, but still something. We know he worked in a factory."

"What are you going to do next?"

"I am going to visit the factories," said the mother with decision, "but first we shall go to see Señor Garriguez at the bank. He may be able to give us some advice. I have a letter to him from a friend in America." Then through the crowded streets they went on to the bank.

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CHAPTER X

A Fruitless Search

At the bank they were faced by the fact that Señor Garriguez was out of town. He was in Madrid, would not return for a week. Mrs. Beltrán withheld her letter of introduction and went out with a preoccupied look upon her face. Anita, by her side, cast furtive glances at the thoughtful face. She felt that they had suddenly come up against a stone wall. Finally her mother broke the silence by saying: "After all, I don't know that he could have done any good, except to make us known to the heads of certain factories. We shall have to conduct our search alone."

"But how will you know where to go?"

"I shall take the telephone directory, make a list of the largest factories first; anyone can tell us which are the most important ones, the ones which are liable to employ the largest number of operatives, and those we will go to first. It may take a long time, but we shall have the satisfaction of knowing that we are doing it thoroughly."

Anita sighed. Her dreams of a speedy reunion with her brother resolved themselves into a vista of unsuccessful visits to uninteresting factories. She looked toward the towering chimneys of the huge factories in the city's outskirts, and wondered if, after

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all, they should find Pepé among the toilers in those busy hives. They went soberly back to their boarding house and spent the afternoon in making a list which they could begin to use the next day.

Then began a long and dreary round of visits, difficult in most instances, since it was not always possible to understand the rough Catalan dialect, and many times there was a sad want of courtesy in their reception. "Pepé Beltrán? Who knew anything about Pepé Beltrán? Yet oftener a respectful ear was lent to their questionings, promises were made to examine the pay rolls, and they would go away feeling a little more encouraged. Yet at the end of a week Mrs. Beltrán decided that without some manner of introduction they were not to expect any great attention, so back they went to hunt up Señor Garriguez. With this urbane and polite gentleman to advise matters soon assumed a different aspect.

"I am grieved, dear ladies," he said, "that you should have endured incivilities which must have been shown you many times. I regret my absence at a time when I could have been of service to you. Pray allow me to take this matter into my own hands. Where is your list? Let me see?"

Mrs. Beltrán handed over the little book in which she had written the addresses. He ran his eye over them. "Ay, ay," he said as he laid it down. "It is a *desgracia,* a *tristeza* that you should have this errand.

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I shall assist you, yes, señora and señorita, I shall do all in my power to assist. You make perhaps two or three calls at different ones of these establishments. You weary yourselves; you accomplish nothing. The persons you see do not know you, do not understand, perhaps, are not interested. It is to small purpose that you weary yourselves in this manner. I propose that you drop the whole thing."

"Oh, but——" Mrs. Beltrán half rose from her chair.

"*Paciencia, paciencia,*" said Señor Garriguez, lifting a slim brown hand. "I propose this: that you allow me to conduct the search in this way. I will each day call up some of these places; it is a matter of business I say. I wish to trace this Pepé Beltrán. We are a bank. They will respond in a businesslike way. They will search their files. I will receive from you your address and at the moment I am in possession of any information I will telephone you. How is this? Better, yes?"

"Oh, señor," returned Mrs. Beltrán brokenly. "I cannot express my thanks. It will relieve us of so much, yet I fear it will be too great a tax upon the time of a busy man."

Over his rather grave face broke a delightful smile. "It is not on me comes the tax. I but instruct one of our clerks; he will report. I go myself to the telephone if there seems encouragement. You

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see, therefore it is not a tax, and if we get a fortunate result, I am happy." He bowed courteously.

"Oh, señor," Anita looked up with alluringly grateful eyes. "You do not know what a relief this is. I did hate going day after day to those factories."

He smiled again. "Do so no more, little one. Enjoy yourself. See our handsome city. Go about, seek amusement and leave the rest to me. Consider me as the friend who is happy to serve you. If there are other matters of business, of uncertainty in which I can advise, do not hesitate to call upon me. I am at your service."

So, comforted and reassured, they went out into the bright sunshine and back to their room at Gracia.

"Did you ever know such a dear?" said Anita when they were on their way. "Mother, I think Spaniards are wonderful. Señor Garriguez made me feel that troubles were rolling off us like water over a waterfall. I feel so free, and it will be so lovely to just be free to enjoy ourselves. Isn't it the greatest relief?"

"It is indeed."

"And weren't you glad to find that Señor Garriguez was so ready to be friendly? Did you expect it?"

"My friend who gave me the letter did not tell me that we should find him so charming, but was, however, most urgent that I should present my letter.

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'He will be of use to you; he will be of use, said Carlotta. She is his cousin, you know, and is married to an American. I nursed her through a severe illness and we became fast friends."

"You make friends everywhere, mother dear," responded Anita and then they were back in the white house with its little garden.

They settled down cheerfully, determining to make the most of their opportunities of seeing the city and relying upon the banker to furnish them with such information as could be gathered. They explored the old streets, they visited the churches, they took excursions into the surrounding country, and between times cultivated the acquaintance of their fellow boarders. They spent long afternoons upon their sunny balcony, where they read or wrote or did fancy work. Sometimes there would be an afternoon *merienda* in the garden in company with Miss Ralston, the art student, the two "Perlitas," as Anita called them, with occasionally an addition in the person of the Spanish youth and on rarer occasion the Russian. They watched their neighbors in idle moments, commenting on this or that one and becoming acquainted with them through surmises.

Across the street, a door or two farther down stood a house similar to the one in which they were located. From one of the upper rooms frequently floated the strains of a violin. Sometimes it seemed that two

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were playing in concert. When the weather was mild and the windows were open it was possible to distinguish what was played. Anita was rather curious about the performers.

"They play well," she said one afternoon, after having listened to a spirited duet. "I wonder if they are professionals. I hear scales and exercises first thing in the morning, and late in the afternoon we generally have the two violins going together. I am going to watch. A day or two later she was rewarded by seeing an elderly man come down the steps with a violin case tucked under his arm. He stood outside waiting for a few moments, then he looked up toward the window from which the music issued. "Come along, Don," he cried, "we'll be late."

A young man's head was thrust from the window. "Coming, Uncle Bruce," came the response, and in another moment a slender youth, also carrying a violin case, joined the other man. They went off down the street together, talking animatedly.

"English," exclaimed Mrs. Beltrán, who had been watching with scarcely less interest than Anita. "Somehow I am glad of that. It gives me a home feeling. I like the looks of that lad, he was so like those we see at home. He reminded me of my young boy cousins."

"I wonder who they are," said Anita still looking after the retreating figures. "Perhaps Doña Carmen

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will know." She sought out their plump little hostess who had little information to give.

"They are Ingleses, señorita," she said. "So I have been told. No, they do not live there altogether. They come sometimes only. The uncle has business which brings him once or twice a year, maybe oftener. They remain two or three weeks, sometimes a month. I do not think they are professional musicians. No, I do not know the name. It is something English, something unpronounceable. Doña Dolores calls them always the Ingleses."

Anita went back to her mother with this information, and from that afternoon they watched each day for the appearance of the two violinists. The young man always strode along with his head in the air. He was broad-shouldered, free of motion, athletic. "Like our boys at home who live out of doors," remarked Mrs. Beltrán. "I'd like to know him."

"I like the uncle's looks, too," returned Anita. "He has such a humorous face, and such kind eyes. I met him one day face to face. He dresses like an Englishman but he looks like an American. I wonder if they could be Americans."

"Oh, no, I hardly think so," Mrs. Beltrán replied. "They would scarcely be here so often if they were, and the boy is so like an English lad with that waving brown hair and that fair skin."

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This special conversation was interrupted by a message from Miss Harriet Perley. Wouldn't they come down into the garden and have tea? Mr. Ivanovitch was going to show them how they drank tea in Russia.

So down they went into the little garden where a table was spread. Miss Ralston was there in an æsthetically colored, flimsy, and rather soiled tea gown. The Misses Perley, Miss Harriet and Miss Agatha, were attired in girlish costumes which admitted of a fine display of lace collars, clinking chains and ornate rings. They were both giggling with excitement, their voices, already tremulous with age, betokening the place of their birth. They gave a sharp accent to every other word, and both talked at once. Mr. Ivanovitch presided at the samovar. He had provided the feast of fruit, cakes and preserved strawberries. This last, he told them, they were to take in their tea. While they were watching operations they were joined by the student, Manuel Machorro, who seated himself in close proximity to Miss Ralston's æsthetic skirts, yet cast languishing glances across the table at Anita. The ladies received their tea in cups, the men in glasses. Each was directed to try the combination of preserves in tea. The young Russian dropped his sinister expression for the moment and seemed quite human, Anita whispered to her mother. Don Manuel hummed Spanish love songs, breaking out once in a while with some ardent line.

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It was a pleasant little party and all came to be on more friendly footing because of it. Anita, interested in the Spanish songs, asked if Don Manuel played guitar or mandolin. He played both and upon persuasion went into the house to get his mandolin.

He sat down upon a stone bench opposite Anita on his return, and directed his song to her. It was something about a white dove and a clavel and all that.

Anita was charmed. "Does one ever hear a serenade nowadays?" she asked.

Don Manuel fixed his dark eyes upon her while he strummed softly. "One does not often, but one can," he told her. "It is a beautiful custom, not so, señorita?"

"It is, yes, it is very beautiful. I should like above all things to hear a serenade," she admitted. Don Manuel changed the air he was playing to a more seductive strain, and still bent his gaze upon Anita. Miss Ralston moved uneasily and leaned her elbows on the table so as to intercept Don Manuel's view of the younger girl. She did not like the laurels snatched from her brows, the brows of the one and only American of the household, for the Misses Perley proclaimed themselves purely cosmopolitan because of a residence abroad of seven years. Just now they were engaged in a conversation upon laces with Mrs. Beltrán. Did she know good laces? Would she give

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her opinion upon some they had just bought? They were making a collection. So far they had found the best in Antwerp. They had been cheated in Venice, but they had found a little shop in Antwerp, a little shop near the cathedral, and so on.

Anita was not listening to this chatter carried on in the staccato tones of Miss Harriet and Miss Agatha. She was rather amused at Miss Ralston's attitude, who, with arms stretched across the table, was twirling a flower in her long fingers. She was rather fluent in speech, both English and Spanish, but Mrs. Beltrán declared her superficial, and Anita suspected her of being a poseur, yet she kept the ball rolling at table and always made one aware of her presence by some trick of dress or conversation.

Presently she tossed her flower to Don Manuel, hitting him squarely on the hand which was vibrating the strings of his mandolin. "A bouquet for you, señor," she said mockingly. "Give us something stirring, something to dance by."

Don Manuel immediately turned to her as he picked up the flower and stuck it in his buttonhole. "You will dance, señorita?" he asked.

"Do you want me to?" she returned, looking at him from under half closed lids.

"*Si, señorita,*" he replied, his fingers quickening the measure of his music.

"Wait; I will get my castanets," said Miss Ralston.

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She swept sinuously from the patio and came back instantly, scarf wound around her lithe figure and the castanets clattering between her fingers. She said a few words in an undertone to Don Manuel, then stood erect, gave two or three quick stamps with her slippered feet and whirled off into a dance unlike any Anita had seen. It expressed grace, passion, abandon, reserve; invitation, dismissal, anger, surrender. Languorous undulations were followed by quick whirlings, stampings of the feet by swaying grace, the snap of the castanets accenting the music of the mandolin all the while. Finally the dance ended with a sudden quick click of the castanets and a wonderful pose with arms aloft.

"Bravo! Bravo!" cried Don Manuel laying aside his mandolin to applaud. The others clapped vigorously, Mr. Ivanovitch loudest of all, and Miss Ralston breathing hard, looked around with the air of one victorious.

"It is wonderful," cried Anita. "I should love to dance like that. I wish you would teach me, Miss Ralston. Where did you learn to dance so wonderfully?"

Miss Ralston laughed, and gave Don Manuel a little side glance. "Where did I learn? In Spain," she answered and went off with her castanets.

Don Manuel came over to where Anita was sit-

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ting. "If you wish to learn, señorita," he said in a low voice, "I myself, will teach you."

"I can dance the *jota* a little," Anita confided to him, "but I should like to learn some other dances. Madre, may I learn? Señor Machorro says he will teach me this dance of Miss Ralston's."

"I think I would begin with something simpler," said Mrs. Beltrán, after a pause. "This seems rather complicated to me."

"I must get castanets and a tambourine," said Anita, turning to Don Manuel. "I shall have to learn first to use the castanets."

"And I shall be the first to teach you, to my great happiness," returned Don Manuel.

This was the beginning of what might be termed the stormy season for Anita. Don Manuel began a series of attentions such as in the old days Anita had dreamed of, but which, strange to say, now failed in their appeal. The night after the Russian tea she was awakened by music under her window. She threw a cloak around her and stole out on the balcony to see a shrouded figure standing there in the garden singing an emotional love song to the strains of a guitar. A serenade! What must one do when one is so complimented? She was uncertain. Must she recognize it or not? There was something sweetly mysterious and romantic in this nocturnal music. In Spain, the land of romance. A cavalier in picturesque

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IT WAS LIKE A DREAM, A POEM

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cloak singing. It was like a dream, a poem. She thought at first that she would waken her mother, and then the sensation of experiencing this alone appealed to her strongly and she stood in the shadows listening. Presently a window on the floor above was raised and she saw a white flower descend to fall at the feet of the singer. He looked up and she saw that, as she suspected, it was Don Manuel. "It was Miss Ralston, of course," Anita murmured to herself. "Perhaps after all he is serenading her and not me. She danced for him. I think now she danced for him alone, and I believe he taught her that dance, that dance which madre does not wish me to learn. Well, I shall go in, for I don't want to take to myself a serenade which belongs to another." She felt quite put upon. The romance was taken out of it. She no longer thought it romantic, and thought only that she was chilly and that she would be more comfortable in bed. So back she crept and shut her ears to the twanging of the guitar and the manly tones.

The next day, however, Don Manuel waylaid her on the stairs. "Was it you, you who gave this?" he asked, drawing from his pocket a white flower, rather the worse for wear.

Anita shook her head. "Not I? Where did you get it, señor?"

"I thought it came from heaven, from an angel,"

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he replied. "Did you not hear, last night under your window?"

"I heard music, if that is what you mean, but I thought it was for Miss Ralston, who has the room above ours."

"Ah, señorita, could you not discern within your heart for whom it was meant? Alas, I have been treasuring all day the hope that this was your response." He held out the flower and gave it a look which should have withered it if it had not already reached that stage. "It is worthless now," he said, with a sweeping gesture tossing the poor flower out of the window.

Not knowing exactly what response to make, Anita continued her way upstairs, saying to herself, "So it was for me after all. I wish I had stayed to the end." She did not take the matter very seriously, however, yet felt a little chagrined that she had missed the full enjoyment. She told her mother about it and they laughed over the fiasco. "It made it like one of these ridiculous situations one sometimes sees on the stage," declared Anita, "one of those mix-ups when everything goes at cross purposes. Fortunately nobody was hurt. Of course Don Manuel merely wanted to pay me a pretty attention. Very nice and polite of him."

But as the days went on, the serenade was repeated, rapturous verses appeared mysteriously under her door, fervid whispers came up to her from beneath the balcony, flowers were tossed in at the window.

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"I feel as if I were a mediæval princess," laughed the girl as she opened one of the missives. "You will have to help me translate this, madre; it is something about 'thinking only of thee.' I hope the Spanish cavalier will not come some night on an Arab steed and carry me off to the mountains in the moonlight."

"You don't seem to be particularly impressed," said her mother, laughing. "It seems to me that I remember a young person who ardently longed for this sort of thing, who thought no true love could be expressed in any other way."

Anita dropped the verses from her hold. "I wonder how long it usually takes for one to find out her depths of foolishness," she said. "One good, honest, true word from dear old Terry would be worth more to me than all this philandering, but that is gone, mother, gone forever, and this froth is what I have in its place. I suppose it serves me right, for I imagined froth was what I wanted because of its pretty bubbles." She tore the poem into fragments, then sat in silence by the window for a long time, looking out but seeing nothing of that which was before her. Instead arose a box-bordered path, a house with tall columns, a view of distant hills. She heard the cheerful laughter of Parthy and Ira, chuckling over some negro wit; she smelt the sweet old-fashioned roses; she listened to a voice which said: "But I do so want to make you happy. It is my

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dearest wish to do so." She left her seat and went over to kneel by her mother. "It has been so long," she said, "so long and I want him more than ever. Why cannot Heaven make us wise in time?"

"Ah, dear, ah, dear," her mother answered, "that is Heaven's secret. Some day we may know why. I, too, have wondered, as you are wondering now, but I believe that somewhere there is an answer."

The bells of evening rang a solemn angelus from a church near by. A sudden shaft of light shot across the room from the setting sun. Some one knocked at the door. "You are wanted at the telephone, señora," said a voice.

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CHAPTER XI

In the Cathedral

Anita started to follow her mother to the telephone, but went back after a moment's agitated uncertainty. Was it Señor Garriguez who was calling? Had he news of Pepé? She sat down, clasping her hands tightly, but after a moment started up suddenly and began to pace the floor. Finally she went out into the entry and peeped over the balustrade. Her mother was just hanging up the receiver in the hall below. Anita ran to the head of the stairs to meet her. "What news?" she asked excitedly. "Was it Señor Garriguez?"

Her mother's lips moved but she seemed unable to make any sound.

She grasped Anita's hand and hurried her to their own room. Anita turned on the electric light. "You look so pale, mother dear," she said. "Is it bad news? Is he—is he——" She paused, unable to give voice to the dread which possessed her.

"I am very foolish," said her mother, recovering herself. "Yes, it was news of Pepé, but not what we hoped to hear. Mr. Garriguez has discovered that he worked at a certain factory; I think it was a cotton mill; up to a year and a half ago he worked there, then suddenly left. The proprietor could not say

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where he went. He left of his own accord. He does not know where he is now, but he had the address of his boarding place. Mr. Garriguez gave it to me. I have written it down." She held out a piece of paper.

Anita took it and scanned the address. "We shall go there, of course."

"Of course. We shall go to-morrow."

"But mother, dear, this is good news. Why are you so overcome by it?"

"It brings him so near. Only a year and a half, eighteen months ago, he was here, in this city. For the first time I can feel his actual presence. I can believe he is here, near me."

"What does Mr. Garriguez say?"

"He thinks we shall find him. He advises us to go to this place where he boarded, and to follow up whatever clue we may be able to get."

This news put all thoughts of serenades and dances out of Anita's mind. She and her mother gave themselves up to speculations, to planning what they would do when they found Pepé, and the next morning they started off early to the factory suburb of Sans where the address led them.

It was a more decent place than that which they had first visited, though plain enough, a house for the lodging of the mill hands, sufficiently near the factory to be convenient. The woman, who kept it, a sharp-eyed rough-voiced individual, remembered Pepé very

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well. "Because of his violin it was," she told them; "always the violin. He had gone, yes, oh, yes, some time ago. An Ingles became interested in him and took him away with him. He might have been an American, she did not know, but at all events, he was attracted by the boy's playing and took him into his employ as guide or courier, or chauffeur or something of that kind."

"Did she know the name of the Englishman?"

"No, she did not know if she had ever heard it. He might be in the city. Yes, he might well be. No, she didn't think he had many intimate friends. He did not like the ways of the mill hands. They were too rough for him. The young people called him the *caballero,* for he was so aloof, so finnikin, and they made fun of him. He cared more for his violin than for sweethearts or jolly comrades, and they called his violin his señorita. No, she hadn't an idea where he had gone. He had never been back, which was not strange when one considered the kind of *joven* he was. The woman was communicative enough and good-hearted enough, in spite of her roughness, but they could get no more than this from her.

"It is something," said Anita as they turned away.

"It is a great deal," acknowledged Mrs. Beltrán, "yet, it will be harder to find him. He has disappeared and leaves no trace behind. We will go to see Mr. Garriguez."

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This excellent gentleman, quiet, dignified, but greatly interested withal, lent an attentive ear to their report. He sat thoughtfully drumming on his desk with his lean brown fingers, after the tale was ended. "We must investigate further," he said at last. "We must discover who is this Ingles. There must be some way of doing this. I will consider, and then we will use such means as are possible. This is a hopeful clue, señora, and we shall follow it up vigorously. Go home and rest in tranquillity. I will report when there is news. No, do not say these words of thanks. I am enjoying myself. It is a plot, a novel in which I am a part, a very small part. It is a relief from the more sordid life of every day. I repeat that I enjoy this."

So again they took their leave to await events and to feel consoled by the calm and practical coadjutor who was so ready to take all responsibility upon his own shoulders.

"I think he is the dearest man," said Anita as they turned down the crooked street which led from the bank to the cathedral. "Dear old Weed is just as good, but he is not so attractive as this nice Señor Garriguez. He reminds me of Don Quixote, he is so lean and brown and so *caballero*. When he talks in that quiet, polite way he makes me feel absolute confidence in him and I come away just as satisfied as if

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he had really promised to send Pepé to us some time to-morrow."

Her mother smiled. "I must say that he inspires confidence in me, too, and I am thankful, indeed, that Providence led us to him."

They rarely missed a visit to the cathedral whenever they were anywhere in the vicinity, and to-day they followed their usual inclination and entered the dark, dignified, solemn place about noon. Only a few persons were within, kneeling women with rapt, expressive faces, a few tourists tiptoeing around with Baedeker's in their hands, and one or two men in worshipful attitude before the altars. As mother and daughter paused before a sculptured tomb, Anita suddenly touched her mother on the arm, and directed her attention to a kneeling figure at the altar nearest them. It was the young man, their opposite neighbor whom they had so often heard called Don by his older companion. He was evidently absorbed in prayer, his hands clasped rigidly, his eyes uplifted towards the Holy Mother to whom he was directing his petitions. In passing him they were obliged to go so near that Mrs. Beltrán's dress swept the lad's feet. They could not forbear a glance at the smooth broad brow, at the fair skin, the waving brown hair. They left him there and went out with a feeling of having intruded upon an acquaintance.

"I have always thought they were Scotch," re-

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marked Mrs. Beltrán, as the mother and daughter were descending the long flight of steps leading to the street. "I have called him Donald in my mind and we know he calls his uncle Bruce. It is unusual to see a Scotchman anything but Presbyterian."

"Perhaps he is. Perhaps he wanted to make a prayer and didn't see why he should not. One does feel very religious and solemn in the old cathedral. They are houses of God and I do not see why any Protestant should not use them."

"I feel that way myself," her mother admitted, "so perhaps our young friend does, too. He is a dear lad. I wish we knew him."

"We might change our boarding place and go to that in which he and his uncle lodge," said Anita with sudden inspiration. We could still take our meals at Doña Carmen's."

"We are very comfortable where we are," returned Mrs. Beltrán, "and I should not like to offend Doña Carmen when she is so good to us. Perhaps some accident will throw us in their way."

But the very next day Anita, watching from the window, saw the departure of these interesting neighbors. "Oh, mother," she called, "come here. The Ingleses are going. Uncle Bruce is there with the bags and there comes Don with the violins. They are getting into a cab."

Mrs. Beltrán came to the window. "Oh, dear

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me," she said, "but I am sorry. I shall miss them. I felt so at home with them, and there will be no more music to cheer us. I am sorry."

Anita went out on the balcony to watch the cab out of sight. "Good-bye, Uncle Bruce," she said under her breath. "Good-bye, Don. I hope you will come back soon."

"I have been thinking that perhaps they have only gone off for a short trip," said Mrs. Beltrán, as Anita came back into the room. "We must find out. Doña Carmen will ask Doña Dolores. It is strange that one should feel so concerned about absolute strangers, but I suppose it is because they are my own countrymen."

"I'd like to find out the name," said Anita; "it would make us seem a little better acquainted with them."

"We will ask Doña Carmen to find out."

Doña Carmen was appealed to and brought them back the news that the Ingleses had gone back to England; they might return in six months, a year, who knows? *"Hay no remedia,"* said Doña Dolores. She regretted to part with them for they were considerate and good tenants. Their name was Abercrombie. Doña Dolores had written it down on a piece of paper, for Doña Carmen found it impossible to remember or indeed to pronounce. The nearest she could come to it was Ahbair-cr-r-ombéeay, with a

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strong accent on the penultimate. "Never shall I try to say this word," she declared, laughing. "I have done with it. It is too difficult. I cannot see why one should have such name as this. It is savage."

"I am more than ever convinced they are Scotch," Mrs. Beltrán said, after Doña Carmen had reported. "Could anything be more so? Bruce Abercrombie, Donald Abercrombie. Well, dear, they have been a source of interest and pleasure whether we ever come across them again or not. Now we must settle down and set our hopes upon Señor Garriguez. It may be months before he learns anything of use to us, so we must make ourselves contented."

The autumn moved toward winter; winter was aging when the next news came, and in the meanwhile Anita busied herself with her Spanish lessons, learned one or two pretty dances, did much sightseeing, grew very weary of Don Manuel, and probed the very shallow depths of Imogene Ralston, discovered that she was superficial and vain, that she resented an attention paid to any but herself, could be spiteful and malicious, yet always outwardly sweet and smiling. Don Manuel did not in the least see through her and continually lauded her sweetness, her brilliancy, her talents. Her brilliancy was due to a ready wit, a good memory and a faculty of appropriating the cleverness of others. Her sweetness was always to the fore when a masculine was present. Her talents consisted in

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making the most of what she professed to accomplish in the way of copies of the old masters. She was desperately jealous of Anita, and so schemed and contrived that it was not long before she had won the young student back to her allegiance, to Anita's relief and the satisfaction of her mother.

The kindly Perlitas lingered on, always declaring that they were departing the next week, yet never going. Their chief fault, which was more a weakness than a fault, was that constant striving to appear many years younger than they were. They spoke of themselves as girls. They wore wonderful transformations from which after a hurried toilet on certain occasions one perceived the gray locks beneath. They powdered; they painted; they walked jauntily, but they were so innocent, so guileless and unsuspicious, so generous and gentle that the most that their childish vanity provoked was an indulgent smile. "Tryin' to be old Miss Young, Parthy would say," was Anita's comment.

With Christmas came many reminders of the old days. Letters and cards, forwarded by the faithful Weed. By this time it had leaked out that Nancy Loomis was no more, but her old friends, while pronouncing themselves astonished by the facts, declared themselves to be always her devoted friends. The young people especially, spoke of envying her such a romantic life and looked upon her as a rare heroine.

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They gave her many bits of news. Pat Lippett was engaged to Betty Page Peyton; the Tom Lindsays had moved away; old Mrs. Abijah Brown was dead; Dr. Plummer had been thrown out of his motor car but not seriously hurt, although the car was. There had been lots of dances and they missed Nancy—she would always be Nancy to them—and wasn't she ever coming back?

All these little bits of gossip brought hours of homesickness to Anita. She thought of the Christmas holidays she had spent with her adopted mother, of the shining faces of Parthy and Ira on Christmas morning when they waylaid her with cries of "Crismuss gif', Miss Nancy." She thought of that one blessed day in the dawn of her acquaintance with Terrence Wirt, when she hoped and feared and half suspected that he loved her, and when coming home together from the church on Christmas Eve, where they had been helping with the decorations, he had said something which sent the blood racing through her veins, although it was not till a month later that he had really spoken openly of his love.

She had left the letters scattered upon the floor and had crept into her mother's arms to whisper sobbingly: "Oh, I am so homesick and miserable. I want to see Parthy and Ira. I want them all. It has all come back. Please love me. Please love me very much."

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Because of these too poignantly sweet memories both she and her mother were glad when Christmastide was over, and the present only absorbed them.

The Russian took his leave before the New Year, "without dropping a bomb in our midst," Anita whispered to her mother when they heard he had gone. Another student took his place, a sallow, unprepossessing person upon whom Miss Ralston's blandishments had no effect and from whom none but the Perlitas were ever able to evoke a remark.

The married couple came or went as business or pleasure swayed them. Señor Lopez was a travelling man, and when he was away upon his trips his wife took occasion to visit relatives. Their place was sometimes taken by transients whose coming would cause a ripple in the otherwise quiet household, and so the days went on till March brought the first encouraging word from Mr. Garriguez.

"Your son has gone to England," came the information. "I have spoken to one who saw him go. I have asked this person to call upon you and tell you all he knows. His name is Tito Alvarez."

The next day the stout maid brought up word that one calling himself Tito Alvarez desired to see the Doña Catalina Beltrán. Would she descend to the *sala* or should he be brought up.

"I will go down," decided Mrs. Beltrán, "unless there are others in the *sala*."

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"There are no others," she was informed, "and Doña Carmen will not permit intruders."

So down mother and daughter went to see a tall, awkward young workman awaiting them in much embarrassment. He had expected the mother and sister of his former comrade to be of his own class, and he knew not how to meet them. Mrs. Beltrán, however, soon put him at his ease, made him sit down, and began her interrogations. He was not a Catalan, he said, and this was evident enough by his speech. Perhaps that is why he and Pepé were friendly. Both were from the country, were *paisanos* who had worked in the fields and had experiences in common.

"Had you known my son long?" inquired Mrs. Beltrán.

"Only a few months, señorita"—he addressed her as the peasants do their superiors—"but we worked side by side. I came to the mill after Pepé, but I had worked elsewhere. When he found that I, too, was Asturiano he was more friendly with me than with others. He was proud, this Pepé, and many did not like him because he was so *caballero*. I understand now why he was so," said the young man after a moment's hesitation.

"Will you tell me why he went away, and with whom?"

"He went because his chance had come. He was always waiting for this chance, was Pepé. He did not

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intend, he said, to spend his life in a mill. Some day the chance would come and he would take it. It came, señorita."

"And how was this?"

"A Señor Ingles heard him playing the violin one day when strolling about. He stopped and listened. 'You play well, my friend,' said this Ingles. 'Who was your teacher?' 'Myself,' said Pepé, with that fine air of his. The Ingles smiled, 'You deserve a better teacher,' he said. Then he looked very hard at Pepé. 'Are you Catalan?' he asked. 'No, I am of Asturias,' Pepé told him. 'Bueno!' cried Señor Ingles. 'Can you read? Can you write?' Pepé said 'yes.' 'Show me,' said the Ingles and whipped a newspaper out of his pocket. He was a great reader, this Pepé, always he would read when he was not working or playing upon his violin, and he was able to prove his words. 'Write your name,' said the Ingles, and he watched while Pepé wrote in fine smooth letters José Maria Beltrán."

Mrs. Beltrán drew a quick sigh but said, "Go on, please; this interests me very much."

"Then, señorita, every day after this would come the Ingles in the evening when we had left the mill. For a week he did this, then suddenly he asked Pepé if he would like to come to him as a clerk, an assistant. 'I do not get along with this Catalan,' he said. 'You know it and the Castilian, also. I like you. I like

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your music. I will give you better pay than you are now getting, and when I leave if you are willing I will take you to England with me."

"Pepé accepted, of course, at once," said Anita, breaking in.

"Of a truth, señorita. He did not hesitate, and I saw him no more for a week, two weeks, then he came to tell me that he was going to England with his friend. I went to the train and saw him go. He was dressed like a gentleman and was very glad and happy, very *alegro,* señorita."

"You do not know where he went?"

"He told me, but I have forgotten."

"Was it to London?"

"I do not think so. It may have been. He would see great sights, I remember he said."

"And the name of this Englishman."

"That I do not know. He always called him 'my friend the Englishman.'"

"But did he not write to you? Did you not correspond?" asked Mrs. Beltrán, eagerly.

"He sent me one post-card, but almost immediately I left Barcelona. My father was ill. I was needed in the fields. I go at once, and have but now returned. I am again at the mill. Here I am told one day that Señor Garriguez wishes news of Pepé. I am sent to this señor. He tells me that the mother and sister of Pepé are here seeking news of him. They wish to see

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me and I come. I bring with me the post-card. I am nothing of a writer, señorita. I make a poor fist at it. I can sign my name and but little more, but I brought the card." He produced a picture post-card carefully wrapped in a bit of paper.

Mrs. Beltrán took it eagerly. "Nita, Nita, see!" she cried. "It is something tangible at last. A piece of his own handwriting." She gazed at it fondly. "His name, his dear name as he writes it. And this place—what is this place?" She held the card to the light that they might both make out the name of the place which the picture represented. It was the cathedral at Chichester. "I am well and I like England. I have seen this cathedral. It is not much like Santa Cruz," were the words written.

"Chichester! In Sussex! My own county, Anita," cried Mrs. Beltrán. "It is there that we must go. He may have been only passing through, yet it is a straw to snatch at. I thank you. I cannot say how much I thank you for bringing this." She turned to the young man at the same time tendering him the card.

"Will you not keep it, señorita?" he said.

"Oh, but—No, I couldn't think of depriving you of it. I know you prize it."

"Nevertheless, señorita, I would be made happy if you would keep it."

It was a precious token to Mrs. Beltrán and she longed to accept, but felt it would be ungenerous to do

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so till Anita spoke up: "If you will give us your address we will each send you a card from England, and when we find Pepé we will send this back to you, and will see to it that he writes you another, too. We will consider that you have merely lent us this."

Such a solution was highly satisfactory to all concerned, so it was left in this way. Mrs. Beltrán took down Tito's address, and he made a deliberate and solemn departure, leaving them in a flurry over plans for their next move.

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CHAPTER XII

Help From England

The bridge of yesterday had doubled its span since Nancy Loomis passed over it to become Anita Beltrán in Spain. Now Spain was left behind; left behind, too, the kind and hospitable friends she had made there. Even Barcelona, which she had not cared for at first, was hard to leave. The little *pension* had become a pleasantly familiar spot, and those who still lingered there parted from them as if from old friends. Doña Carmen loaded them down with blessings and bounties, the latter in the form of *bizcochos,* fruit, *dulces.* The Perlitas, protesting that nothing now would persuade them to remain a week longer, insisted upon bestowing upon each a handsome lace mantilla, black for Mrs. Beltrán, white for Anita. Don Manuel appeared that last morning with a huge bunch of flowers and a box of that delectable sweet known as *turron.* Even Miss Ralston, not conspicuous for generosity, presented a bad sketch of a beautiful place, and good Mr. Garriguez was at the train with tickets and instructions. Ladies travelling *sola,* he felt had need of much counsel.

So off they went, taking the shortest route as far as Dieppe, where they would embark for Newhaven and thus reach Sussex direct.

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Leaving the balconied houses, the smoking factory chimneys and the cathedral, dominating the city's highest point, they were borne northward, and settled down to their hours of travel.

"Somehow," said Anita, "catching a last glimpse of the cathedral towers, "I shall always associate Santa Cruz with our English lad Donald Abercrombie. Wouldn't it be queer, mother, if we were to run across him and his uncle in England? One is continually doing that in travelling about."

"I wish we might meet them," returned Mrs. Beltrán thoughtfully. "There was something very attractive about that boy. I always felt that I would like Pepé to look like him."

Anita gave her mother a quick glance. "That is strange," she said, "for, do you know after we saw him kneeling there in the cathedral I had a faint glimmer of hope that he might really be Pepé."

"What a fantastic idea. That is a time when your imagination ran away with you, for we know his name is not Pepé, that it is Donald, that he has an Uncle Bruce, and that they are English. We know that without doubt."

"Oh, yes, of course I told myself it was absurd. We haven't by any chance an Uncle Bruce, have we, madre?"

"No, indeed. You have no uncle at all. My dear young brother died when I was still a little girl, and

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my baby sister I cannot remember, died before that. I have an old aunt living and several cousins."

"I should like some girl cousins, some one like Amparo. I could become very, very fond of Amparo. Have I any girl cousins, mother?"

"None very near, a second cousin at the most, the granddaughter of the aunt I was speaking of. Let me see—she must be about your age, a little older, maybe."

"I suppose we shall find it very shivery in England after our sunny Spain," remarked Anita, a little regretfully.

"Spring in England is chilly," Mrs. Beltrán was obliged to confess, but we shall be in the south where it is much milder, and if we can find comfortable lodgings with an open grate I think we shall do. We should be able to find something at a moderate price now when it is out of the season."

"It is going to be a long journey," sighed Anita.

"It is long, but we shall do it in less time than if we were to have gone direct by sea, and certainly I did not relish the voyage over the turbulent Bay of Biscay at this time of year."

A glimpse of France as they were whizzed along, a night and a day in Paris, a few hours in quaint old Rouen, full of the spirit of Jeanne d'Arc, a glimpse of Dieppe, a quiet night trip to Newhaven and there were England and Sussex, with Chichester not too far away.

It was Chichester which called them, and for which

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town of heavenly peace they immediately started. They found quiet lodgings in the Southgate and settled down again, Anita curious, interested, excited; her mother reminiscent, wistful, pensive.

"England in primrose time," murmured Mrs. Beltrán, looking out of their window upon a garden gay with spring flowers. All the banks and sunny hillsides will be covered with them. We shall go out to gather them and have bowlfuls upon our tables all the time while they last."

"What is the first thing we shall do?" inquired Anita, arranging her Spanish books on the mantel.

"We shall begin to make inquiries for Pepé. I shall send for Ernest Kirkby. He will know the clergy here. He will interest those who can help us, and then I shall put an advertisement in the paper. Already I have written to my Aunt Manning to tell her we were coming. No doubt she will be here soon with her granddaughter, Lillian."

"Where do they live? Far from here?"

"No, they happen to be quite near, at a little place called Borton. We have another cousin at Rye, somewhat farther off. Her name is Emily Oliver. I think she has three children, a son and two daughters, one quite a little girl, the other older. I have never seen them. Then farther away still, in London, are other cousins, children of my mother's brother whose name was Henry Fuller.

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The next day appeared Lillian Manning. She had walked over from Borton, meant to walk back and thought nothing of it. She was a tall, fresh-colored, breezy girl with eyes of a true turquoise—not sapphire—blue, fair hair, a humorous mouth and rather a large nose. She brought her dogs with her, a Pommeranian and an Airedale, and arrived quite early while Anita and her mother were still at breakfast. She came into the little sitting-room bringing a breath of spring with her, and greeted her cousins in a manner half boyish, ordering her dogs to lie down and laying her whip across her knees when she seated herself.

"I'm too early, aren't I?" she exclaimed. "But Granny was so anxious I should come, and I wanted to see you myself, and ask you to come over for tea this afternoon, so I started off before Granny was up."

"Without breakfast?" exclaimed Anita. "Do sit down and join us. We'll send out for some hot toast."

"Oh, no, thanks. I had Tibby call me and she had everything ready. It is a glorious morning for a walk. Granny sends her love, Cousin Katharine, and wants to know if you can't come to-day. She cannot wait to see you. She isn't quite up to so long a walk. Perhaps you're not either." She gave a flick of her whip at the Airedale who showed signs of restlessness. "Lie down, Tommy," she cried. "Are you up to it?" she asked Anita.

"How far is it?"

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"Oh, not over three miles as the crow flies, a little farther by the road. Do you like Sussex? Do I say cousin, or simply Anita?"

"Anita, of course, although I am mighty glad to have found cousins."

"Maybe you'll not be when you know us," returned Lillian with a little laugh. "We're very English, you know, very insular, especially Granny. She is very eager to see you, but you look so Spanish I am afraid I must warn you. She has rather a grudge against Spain."

"But why?"

"Principally on account of Philip the Second and Torquemada. She might get over Philip, but Torquemada is too much for her. She will probably go down to her grave filled with resentment against him for his part in the Inquisition. She has strong prejudices, has Granny, and I warn you she will hold you accountable."

"For what?" Anita set down her cup and looked puzzled.

"Oh, for all of that; Philip and the Inquisition, but she will be very boastful of Drake when she speaks of the Armada. She will taunt you with Drake."

"But all that happened so long ago, and what had I to do with it, anyhow?"

"Nothing, of course, but that is Granny's way. I verily believe if she knew a man named Adam she would accuse him of being partly responsible for the

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fall of mankind, because he happened to be named after the first Adam."

"Aunt Manning must be rather—rather peculiar," ventured Anita.

"She is rather, but she's an old dear for all that. It is only on certain subjects that she goes galloping off, and Spain is one of them."

"But I am half English," Anita went on, "and Drake belongs to me, too."

"So he does. You will have to remind her of that. I don't believe she will think of it unless you do. She is a person of one idea and ever since she had Cousin Katharine's letter she has been piling up evidence against Philip. You'd suppose she had a personal grievance against him, but it is only that she would rather get into a good hot argument than eat." Lillian laughed and showed her white, even teeth. Her mouth was rather too large, and was only attractive when she laughed. "Well, we must be getting back," she said as the others rose from the table.

"Aren't you going to stay and go with us?" inquired Anita.

"Why——" She hesitated and looked at Mrs. Beltrán.

"Do stay, Lillian. Stay and have lunch with us," urged Mrs. Beltrán, "then we can all go together. I am not sure that I could find the way to Primrose Cottage. Besides we want to see all we can of you

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while we are in the neighborhood. Will your grandmother care if you stay?"

"Oh, dear, no; not she. You're sure you won't mind the dogs? They are rather a nuisance sometimes."

"Speaking for myself, I'd love to have them around," Mrs. Beltrán assured her. "They remind me of the old days and I am sure Anita will like to have them."

"Indeed I shall," responded Anita. "Tell us their names, Lillian."

"The Pom is named Haddon Hall, Lord Haddon Hall, because he is so lordly, but he has several nicknames; Nibs, is the favorite, for the boys began calling him 'his nibs.' He was sent to me by a friend who lives near Haddon Hall, and I generally call him Haddie, rather nice name, we think; not too common. Tibbie calls him Addie, which is disgracefully feminine for such a gentlemanly person. The other one, I regret to say, has a bar sinister, is not quite pure breed, and he realizes it, but he is a dear. His name is Tommy Atkins for he is missus' ickle sojer boy. I'll show you how he can shoulder a gun and he can hurrah for the king, too."

"I'd love to see him play soldier," cried Anita.

"You shall see. Come out and he shall show you his tricks." She whistled to the dogs and they followed her to the garden where she put Tommy through

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his paces. He sat up somewhat waveringly on his hind legs and shouldered the stick his mistress brought. "He looks rather a meek Tommy, doesn't he?" said Lillian, eyeing him critically. "Hims mus' put more animation into 'spression," she chided. "Lively, Tommy, lively, now!" And Tommy settled himself more firmly on his hind legs, pricked up his ears and tried to look as if alertly enjoying himself.

"Good dog!" cried Anita.

"Hims was a brave sojer," said Lillian. "Hims mus' have lumps of sugar. Will Cousin Anita get Tommy lumps of sugar?"

Anita ran into the house and came back well provided, so that Tommy enjoyed an ample reward. Then Lillian, in rather a throaty, but not unsweet voice, began singing "God Save the King," keeping time with the stick, Tommy watching eagerly and at the last words joining in with three sharp yelps. This performance demanded another lump of sugar and Tommy was free to follow Haddie, whom he had been furtively watching as he nosed about the flower beds.

"What can Haddie do?" inquired Anita, still interested.

"Oh, nothing specially. He is a gentleman, you see, and doesn't have to earn his living. Tommy knows he is in the ranks and he drops his H's like Tibbie, and always calls the cat 'Otspur, just as she does."

"You have a cat then?"

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"Oh, yes, and a lizard. The cat is named Hotspur because he always finds out the warmest places and because he purrs. The lizard has not much personality. He lives in the greenhouse chiefly, but I like him. He is green and is named Sigñor Verdi."

"I shall love to see them all," said Anita, well pleased with this original sort of cousin, and beginning to feel that there were interests here as well as in Spain.

"Have you been to the cathedral and have you seen the Market Cross and the almshouses? But, of course, you have," said Lillian.

"But of course we haven't, for we came only yesterday," Anita told her.

"To be sure. I forgot that. You won't want to be getting on too fast this morning if you walk to Borton this afternoon. Perhaps you will be staying all night with us. That would be jolly, and we could do something to-morrow. There is quite a bit that is interesting in Sussex, at least we think so. Shall we do the cathedral this morning, or not?"

"Oh, let us go by all means," decided Anita. "It is not far and we have a particular interest in it because of my brother."

"Your brother? Oh, yes, tell me about him as we go along. I know it is a most interesting tale. Granny said so, and she is quite excited over it."

Anita and her mother went off to get their hats,

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leaving Lillian playing with the dogs till they should be ready. This being but a matter of a few moments they were on their way sooner than they had looked to be, and took this occasion to tell of their experiences to a most attentive listener.

"My word!" exclaimed Lillian, stopping short when they reached the cathedral. "I can't go in till you have told me the rest. I never in all my life met anyone who had gone through such marvelous experiences. I might live forever in our little town and the most that would ever happen would be a marriage or a garden party. It is a wildly exciting event to go to London, and the height of felicity to spend a week at Littlehampton in the summer. I must tell the boys about you. They'll have you a heroine at once."

"Who are the boys?"

"Oh, the lads in our village and the country around, Reggie Ford, Bertie Sargent, brothers of my girl friends. You'll see them."

Anita wondered if any of these might be a person of special interest to Lillian. It was too early for confidences as yet, but she expected they would come. She watched Lillian walking ahead with a swinging stride and a set of shoulders like a boy, so unlike the very feminine girls in Spain, Amparo, Rosario, Conchita and others she had met. There was a breeziness about Lillian as if she spent much time out of doors, and did athletic things. Anita imagined she must play tennis

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well, and that she was a good comrade to boys, but there could be nothing of the coquette about her, she fancied. She found her original, whimsical, and not a little puzzling. It would not be at once that she revealed herself to a stranger, even though that stranger be her cousin.

After Spain's gorgeously imposing cathedrals that of Chichester fell short of Anita's expectations, though she confessed, after a time, that it possessed a beauty and interest of its own, and that she could learn to feel at home within its walls, a thing she could never do in Spain's grander temples.

They were coming out when they encountered a portly, smiling, pink-faced individual in clerical dress who seized upon Mrs. Bertrán with an exclamation of pleasure. "Well, Katharine, here you are. They told me I should probably find you here. And this is the daughter." He took one of Anita's hands in both of his. "Doesn't look like you, not a bit. Ah, Miss Lillian, I overlooked you, so busy with these new arrivals, you see. How is the grandmother? Tell her I have a new proof against her arguments on the war question, and that I am coming over to have it out with her. Where were you all going? May I come along?"

And this it seemed was Ernest Kirkby. Such a different figure from that which Anita had pictured to herself. That had been a pale, serious, priestly person

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who spoke in melancholy tones and with a sanctimonious expression. This confident, unabashed, agreeable individual was quite outside any of her imaginings. He had come over immediately upon receiving Mrs. Beltrán's note, he told them. He wanted to hear the whole story at once. What was he to do? Was there anything to be attended to on the spot?

"Suppose I go back to your lodgings with you, Katharine," he proposed, "and let these young folks do their sightseeing together. You've seen all there is of Chichester, saw it years ago. Come along and tell me the whole story so there'll be no delay."

So off he set with Mrs. Beltrán, talking earnestly and leaving Anita to Lillian's company.

"You know Mr. Kirkby very well, don't you?" inquired Anita as they started off to view the Market Cross.

"Oh, dear, yes. We've known him all our lives. He was a great friend of your grandmother, as well as of mine. He is a perfect old dear. Everybody loves him. He has a darling house and a nice motherly housekeeper. He has never married on account of his invalid sister they say, but Granny hints at another reason."

Anita was silent, not caring to say that she had any knowledge of that other reason. "He has come over," she said after a pause, "so that mother can consult him about the best way to set investigation on foot in order

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to find Pepé. Mother thinks that he can give her good counsel."

"I believe he can. Everyone goes to Mr. Kirkby when they are in trouble," Lillian told her.

"He is no longer a mere curate; he is rector of his church?"

"Oh, yes, and we are very proud that he is."

They wandered around the fine old town, viewing the lovely gardens, fair in their spring blossoms, the sweeping lawns freshly green, the stately old houses, the quaint and pretty St. Mary's Hospital. Of this last Lillian said, "This we must visit some day, and take it all to itself. I want you to see some one who lives there, as odd a character as you can meet anywhere. We call her Aunt Betsy Potter, though strictly speaking, she is not an aunt at all. However, I shall not tell you about her, for now we must get back. It is lunch time and I am half starved."

They reached the lodgings to find Mr. Kirkby gone some time before, with half a dozen plans to carry through and numerous appointments to meet, all made in behalf of Anita and her mother.

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CHAPTER XIII

Primrose Cottage

The walk to Borton was one Anita long remembered; along the Portsmouth Road, on through the little villages, smiling and fair, then Borton. When she was not walking with Lillian and chatting about dogs, flowers or Great-aunt Manning, she was being entertained by Mr. Kirkby with tales of Sussex, and for the first time realized how rich in history was this county of her mother's birth. It was here, the good clergyman told her, from one of these villages, that Harold rode on his mission to the Duke of Normandy. One can see a representation of that event on the Bayeux tapestry. It was in Sussex that King Canute had a palace, and tradition has it that on this spot he defied the rising tide.

"Oh, there is much to learn about Sussex," the rector told her. "It claims more than one literary celebrity, and can show you many interesting pages of history."

"How well you know it," exclaimed Anita.

"There is scarce a spot which I have not visited. I have walked its length and breadth, and know its most secluded corners. We shall have to have some good walks, all of us. You will like to see Hastings and Battle Abbey, the great castle at Arundel and you

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will like to go to Brighton. We shall have to plan a lot of excursions this summer."

"But first we must find Pepé," declared Anita.

"Our finding him will not interfere with the excursions," replied Mr. Kirkby with a smile. "By to-morrow we can find out whether or not he is in Chichester. It does not take long to exhaust the possibilities of a town of that size."

"And then what next?" inquired Anita.

"We shall advertise in several papers, London ones as well as others, and if necessary get a detective at work."

"But won't that cost a great deal?" asked Anita anxiously.

The rector looked down at her with a fatherly smile. "That is something you don't have to bother your little head about. Now, then, let's look at that bank of primroses; it's as fine a one as I have seen. You've come at a lovely time of year to old England, a time of poetry and beauty. There is a fine flock of sheep over there. You know the May Queen, of course: 'And in the fields all round I hear the bleating of the lambs.' Do you remember? Tennyson had a country home at Blackdown, you know, not so very far from where I live. You will like to go there some day."

Anita looked off to where a flock of sheep whitened the green field like a moving drift of soiled snow. She

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thought it a picturesque sight. But suddenly her attention was arrested by the sight of a little lamb tottering along on feeble legs and smeared with blood. "Look, look," she cried, "something has torn that poor little lamb. Could it be dogs? Don't the shepherds watch them more carefully than that?"

Mr. Kirkby looked in the direction she indicated, put on his glasses and looked again, then burst into a hearty laugh. "She doesn't know our sheep country, does she Lillian?" he said to the latter who had just come up with Mrs. Beltrán. "Poor little lamb, it is dreadfully torn, isn't it Lillian?"

Then Lillian laughed, too, and Anita began to think them exceedingly heartless, but seeing her expression Mr. Kirkby patted her on the arm and began to explain. "Don't waste your sympathies on the lamb, my child," he said. "I will tell you what has happened. The lamb's mother has died or has been killed, and to save the lamb they have given it to another mother whose own lamb has died. She would not care for an unfamiliar lambkin so they have stripped the dead lamb of its fleece and fastened it upon the living lamb to make the mother sheep accept it as her own."

"Oh!" Anita looked again. "Oh, how very queer and interesting. It is a great country for sheep, isn't it?"

"A great one. You have heard of the Southdown mutton, of course. Over toward Lewes is the South-

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down country more particularly. We shall have to take you over there, but you may eat some of the mutton almost anywhere."

They were now coming to Borton. The tide was rising and the little town on its estuary looked a charming place, a fact Anita was quick to remark upon.

"We think it quite ugly when the tide is out," Lillian told her, "though artists flock here and paint even the mud flats. They look very well in pictures with the spire of the old church somewhere in the background, but we like it best when the tide is up."

A short walk took to them to the door of Primrose Cottage, a quaintly-pretty, vine-hung abode with garden wandering off at the back and laburnum bushes at the side. It was more spacious than at first appeared as Anita noted as soon as she stepped inside. They were met at the door by an erect old lady with penetrating grey eyes, a widow's cap upon her head and a little shawl over her shoulders.

"Well, here you are at last," she exclaimed. "What brought you here, Ernest Kirkby?" she asked with a twinkle in her eyes.

"I came to protect the strangers," retorted he, merrily.

"Sounds like your impudence," returned the old lady. "This is Katharine, of course. She looks like I supposed she would after not having laid eyes on her for—how many years is it?"

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"It must be as many as sixteen or seventeen," responded her niece. "I don't see that time has changed you much, Aunt Manning."

"It hasn't changed her a particle," Mr. Kirkby put in. "I'll venture to say she hasn't altered one opinion that she ever held."

"I'm not a turn-coat, whatever I am," Mrs. Manning answered back, leading the way into the pleasant living room. "See if Tibbie has tea ready to bring in, Lillian. I want to have a look at this child of Katharine's. Come over here to the light, child, and let me see if there is any Drayton in your looks."

She led Anita to the small-paned window and took her face between two wrinkled, but still delicate, hands. "Can't see a sign of Drayton," she decided at last. "I'm afraid you are all Spanish, except that you are not dark. There is one thing to be thankful for, however, you haven't that long, narrow, phiz of Philip's. Ugh! how I despise that face of his."

"Never mind, Philip, Granny," said Lillian, coming in. "He can wait till we have nothing else to talk about. Anita isn't responsible for him."

"She'd have her hands full if she were," declared the old lady. "But, Anita! What a name! Why didn't you give her some good sound English name, Katharine?"

"She was named for her father's mother, who was

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called Ana. Anita means little Ana, just as Nancy or Nannie do in our tongue."

"Then I shall call her Nannie. No, Nancy; I like that better."

"I was always called Nancy till less than two years ago," Anita spoke up.

"Then Nancy you shall be to me. I will have none of that lingo in my house, not after Torquemada——"

"Here is the tea, Granny," Lillian interrupted hastily, and for the moment Torquemada was allowed to rest in peace.

"Now tell me all about it. How and when you came, how long you shall stay, and all the rest of it," said Mrs. Manning, when all were served from the "curate" which was wheeled up to her.

"We came by way of Paris. We arrived yesterday and we shall stay as long as it seems hopeful that we may find my son here," Mrs. Beltrán replied.

"I suppose the son has some outlandish Spanish name, too. How you ever expect to find him, in an English-speaking country, with an unpronounceable name is more than I can tell. What did you tell me was his name, Katharine?"

"It is José, but we call him by the diminutive, which is Pepé."

"Of all ridiculous names," cried Aunt Manning. "Sounds like baby talk. Pay-pay. Baby 'ants to pay-

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pay. I shall never call him by anything so silly. What is it in English, plain English?"

"It is Joseph, Aunt Manning; Joe, I suppose we might say," Mrs. Beltrán answered with an amused smile.

"Joseph. Good, that is a good family name. We have Josephs in the family as far back as sixteen hundred. And where do you imagine this Joseph is?"

"We have learned that he came to England, and are going on that information," Mrs. Beltrán told her. "Mr. Kirkby is going to help us follow up the clue."

"Well, Ernest is used to following up clues. He can out-argue almost anybody in the county except me, and I will not be out-argued by anybody. I have a right to my opinions."

"So have I! So have I," spoke up Mr. Kirkby. "The trouble with Mrs. Manning is this," he said, turning to Mrs. Beltrán, "she calls everyone opinionated who will not change an opinion to suit hers, but she isn't a bit opinionated. Oh, no, not she."

"Will you stop that clatter, Ernest Kirkby?" cried Mrs. Manning, "The idea of a little whippersnapper like you daring to overrule me. Why, I have taken you home to your mother to spank, dozens of times, and I'd do it again if she were alive."

Mr. Kirkby put back his head and roared. He dearly loved to provoke just such speeches.

"Do stop your noise" said Mrs. Manning, shaking

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her head at him. "With such a roaring bull of Bashan about one can't think. What was I saying, Katharine? Oh, yes, about finding this boy. It is going to be some expense, isn't it?"

"Now, Mrs. Manning"—Mr. Kirkby became serious—"that is not a matter that we need discuss. The time to spend money hasn't come yet."

"Well, when that time does come there will need to be money to spend, won't there? What I was going to say, Katharine, was this: I see no use in your wasting your means on lodging houses and all that. You and Annie, no, it was to be Nancy, wasn't it? You and Nancy had best come right here and stay with us and save your money."

Then Anita understood why Aunt Manning was an old dear. But Mrs. Beltrán began to protest and Mrs. Manning turned suddenly to Lillian. "Go tell Tibbie to come get the tea things" she said, "and take Nancy with you. Show her the greenhouse and the garden, but don't let the dogs in. They will scratch up that new border I have been having Timpkins make. I want to talk to Katharine. I suppose I shall have to let Ernest stay, for a man does have the wit to understand a situation once in a while, though young people never do."

At this parting shot the two girls left the room. Anita was beginning to understand that Aunt Manning's bark was worse than her bite, and really felt that

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she could like her. There was a mocking glimmer in those sharp gray eyes which told the tale.

"She is having a lovely time," declared Lillian. "If there is anything Granny loves it is a bout with Mr. Kirkby. She adores him and he does her, although to hear them you would think they meant to tear each other's eyes out. There is Hotspur. You can make his acquaintance while I go speak to Tibbie."

Anita set herself to work to make friends with an amber-eyed tawny-hued Angora which lay curled up on the window sill. He stretched himself lazily and responded to her strokings by loud purrs, opening one sleepy eye to view the unfamiliar presence. He evidently thought well of her, for he did not move, but continued his contented purrs and permitted the caresses. Haddie and Tommy, waiting outside, were at first in high glee when they saw the two girls come out, but stood in dejected attitude when they were forbidden to pass through the gate which led into the rambling garden.

The garden of itself was a delight, a riot of spring blossoms, and in the tiny greenhouse were other plants waiting to be set out. Among these plants, sunning himself on a ledge, they found Signor Verdi, a lithe green creature, tame enough to allow Lillian to scratch his head and to take him in her hand where he lay quietly enough, but flashed back among the green when Anita tried to make friends with him. "Sometimes

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in winter I lose sight of him for weeks," Lillian told her, "then some bright morning I come out and there he is as alive as possible."

They made the rounds of garden and greenhouse and then returned to the house to find Mrs. Manning and Mr. Kirkby chaffing, arguing, all but quarreling.

"I have always maintained I will have nothing Spanish in my house," Mrs. Manning was saying.

"Not even Spanish mackerel, I suppose," the rector suggested.

"I certainly don't order Spanish olives, nor Spanish oil; I am very particular about that. No, Ernest Kirkby, I maintain that I have made it a rule not to encourage Spanish products."

"I'll bet you tuppence that you eat something Spanish every day of your life," cried her antagonist.

"I beg you will mention it."

"Marmalade, orange marmalade. You can't deny that you eat it to your breakfast every morning."

"Nonsense. Why, man alive, it is Scotch, made in Dundee. You should know that."

"I do know that," the rector retorted triumphantly. "Of course it is Dundee marmalade, but where do the oranges come from? Seville! Seville! They have to use those bitter oranges, you know."

Mrs. Manning was nonplussed for the moment, then she broke out into a hearty laugh. "It's never too late to mend," she said. "Lillian, I want you to see to it

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that there is always strawberry jam on the table at breakfast after this."

"Oh, but Granny, I like orange marmalade so much better to my breakfast."

"Then you can buy it. I shall not," replied her grandmother, lifting her eyebrows and half shutting her eyes, but smiling at the same time. "I'll get even with you yet, Ernest Kirkby," she cried. "See if I don't. Not going, are you?"

"I must be getting on. Dear woman, I am afraid to stay. This is my hour of triumph and I don't want to lose its glow by tarrying too long, besides I promised to spend the night in Chichester with a friend. I shall see you very soon again, all of you."

Mrs. Manning looked after him as he went off briskly down the street. "There goes one of the best men that ever lived," she commented. "I never could see what you were thinking of, Katharine, to throw him over for that poor visionary."

"I suppose it was for the same reason that you threw over 'Squire Topham for Uncle Manning," returned Mrs. Beltrán, having learned from Mr. Kirkby the best kind of weapons to use in her controversies with her aunt.

"Humph!" Aunt Manning ejaculated, but did not pursue the subject. It was a matter of family history that Aunt Manning might have married an heir to nobility, but that she had preferred another and poorer

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man. She had been a widow for many years. Her only son had gone into the army, had married in India, and at the death of his wife had sent his baby girl home to his mother in England. His death, a few years later, left Lillian with no one but her grandmother to look to, and the two, who understood one another, were devoted.

The two girls were hardly in before they were out again, for Lillian would show Anita the harbor when the tide was up and the fishing boats sitting gallantly upon the shining water. The dogs, too, were begging for a walk and being persons of importance must be indulged. Haddie trotted along daintily, avoiding mud as a gentleman should, but Tommy was into everything, and Lillian, who read into her pets certain peculiarities, entertained Anita by describing them. She maintained that Hotspur could sing, though he had no ear for music and always was off the key. Tommy, since associating with Haddie, tried hard not to drop his H's, but always forgot when he was excited. Moreover, he lisped a little. She talked so seriously about these characteristics, that Anita came to believe they really possessed them, and found them vastly amusing.

On the way down the street they met a well set-up young man, with a fine, straightforward manner and a clear blue eye. He was presented as Bertie Sargent. "We are old playfellows," said Lillian to her cousin. "It was Bertie who gave me Tommy."

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"Oh, was it?" Anita wondered if this were why Tommy appeared to be the favorite.

The three walked down to the harbor, coming upon an artist hard at work trying to catch the reflections in the water before the light should fade. Bertie flung him some chaffing remark which he answered in kind, and presently began packing up his sketching kit, calling to them to wait for him. "The light has gone," he said, "and there's no use keeping on."

They walked slowly to allow him to overtake them, meanwhile Lillian hastily informed her cousin that he had come down from London for sketching; that he was a cousin of Bertie's, and that he would certainly make his mark as his work had already been hung by the Royal Academy. His name, she said, was Harry Warren.

It naturally fell out that Anita should walk back with the young artist while Lillian and Bertie followed on behind. There were many nonsensical remarks tossed back and forth and before they reached Primrose Cottage Anita felt herself on a very friendly footing with them all. It was good to be again among those of her own age and speaking her own language, and there were few regrets for Spain that evening.

She was given her choice of sharing a room with her mother or with Lillian, and at the latter's urging decided to become her room-mate. "We should be excellent friends," remarked Lillian, as she stood be-

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fore her mirror, briskly brushing her thick light hair. "You see we are much in the same boat. Neither of us has a father and we were neither of us born in England."

"I am afraid the fact of my not having been will work against me with Aunt Manning," replied Anita, ruefully. "Why is she so terribly down on Spain?"

"Haven't you discovered the reason? It is because of your mother. Granny was devoted to her sister, your grandmother, and to your mother as well, so she cannot forgive your father for making them both unhappy, and since she cannot wreak her vengeance on him she takes it out on Spain itself, and especially upon the two whom she considers the most deserving of abuse. She really gets a great deal of satisfaction out of it, a sort of vicarious punishment, as it were. Poor, dear Granny; you will have to be very enthusiastic about England if you want to please her."

"I shall not have to try," returned Anita, "for I really feel enthusiastic. Isn't Mr. Kirkby an old dear?"

"He is most delightful. He is another cause of Granny's feeling of ill-will toward your father. She wanted Cousin Katharine to marry Mr. Kirkby and believes that she might have done so but for your father. So you see she has a double grudge."

"I understand, and am glad you have unravelled the mystery. I couldn't understand why she was so dreadfully down on Spain."

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Lillian tossed her thick braid of hair over her shoulder, and snuggled down at the foot of the bed to watch her cousin's preparations for the night. They grew more and more confidential, though neither spoke of the one nearest her heart, although the last thought of Anita was given to her lost lover, while a vision of Bertie Sargent slipped from a remembrance into a dream of Lillian's.

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CHAPTER XIV

WAR!

A WEEK at Chichester served to dispel any hope of finding Pepé there, and at her aunt's urgent insistence Mrs. Beltrán consented to making a visit of indefinite length at Primrose Cottage.

"That girl of yours is not having enough lively company, always with sober grown folks," said Aunt Manning. "You and I can be serious if we choose; it's the time of life for us to be, but Nancy needs chirking up. I can see a little pucker of anxiety on her face sometimes that will mean wrinkles after a while. She is entirely too young to have wrinkles. They come too soon as it is. She has had a deal of trouble, poor child, from all you tell me, and she is more English than Spanish in spite of her looks. Pity she couldn't have kept her yellow hair; then no one would have suspected." Aunt Manning always spoke of Anita's Spanish parentage as if it were a disgrace and a thing to be hushed up, if possible.

Primroses faded. The hedges became white with May; larks and nightingales, blackbirds and thrushes haunted the lanes and woodsy places; still Anita and her mother lingered at Primrose Cottage. An English Nancy was quite to Aunt Manning's liking, and she was kindness itself in spite of her rather caustic tongue. It was a case where actions spoke louder than words.

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In time she made less and less reference to Spanish traits, bull fights and the Inquisition. She read the papers diligently, looked grave and thoughtful during the whole of many days, had long arguments with Mr. Kirkby when he called, but the arguments concerned Germany and not Spain.

Meanwhile Anita was enjoying herself. There was still Pepé to think of, but all was being done that could be in that quarter, and Terrence Wirt, though unforgotten, was drifting into a memory whose poignancy lessened as present pleasures brightened the summer days. There were walks to neighboring villages, excursions to farther ones, picnics and garden parties, all seeming to Anita like pages from an English novel. Bertie Sargent was always in attendance and Harry Warren oftener than not, while in the company of "His Riverence," as Anita called Mr. Kirkby, she absorbed much knowledge of England's history, especially that which had to do with Sussex.

A week at Littlehampton gave them a nearer view of the sea, an excuse to visit Arundel Castle, and to make a short visit to Rye, where dwelt the cousins Oliver. These appeared to Anita more formal, reserved and conventional than the dwellers at Primrose Cottage, and she felt that she could never become as intimate with them.

Lillian gave her a loyal friendship. Her dainty American clothes, the way she wore her veil, her little

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Southern drawl, her use of certain expressions all fascinated this English cousin who offered Anita the quality of homage which she had been accustomed to receive at home. Frank, boyish, original, with much of her grandmother's fearlessness of speech, but with the same kindly spirit, Lillian was a companion not to be despised and the girls were inseparable, the two dogs generally trotting at their heels.

It was one day on the sands at Littlehampton that Lillian first hinted at there being a closer relation between herself and Bertie than she had been willing to admit. It was July and already there were disquieting rumors. Lillian was employing herself in digging holes in the sand with the tip of her parasol. The dogs were running joyously up and down the sands, scaring the more timid little children at play and animatedly inviting attention from boys who might desire to throw sticks for them to bring back. Anita was lying back languidly watching a group of children who were building a fort.

"And if there should be war," said Lillian suddenly, withdrawing her parasol's tip from a deep hole she had made.

"War?" cried Anita, sitting up straight.

"Yes. Mr. Kirkby thinks there are ominous signs, though Granny declares not. She will not believe it can be, but Mr. Kirkby is not so sure. It would be with Germany, of course."

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"AND IF THERE SHOULD BE WAR," SAID LILLIAN, SUDDENLY

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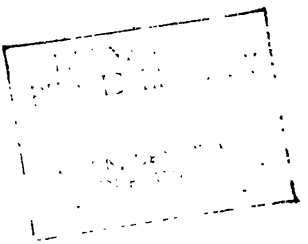

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Anita leaned forward more attentively. "It would be dreadful, but could it last long?"

"As you say in your Spanish: '*Quien sabe?*' They would go, Bertie and all of them; they have said so. Bertie is very patriotic, and I am a soldier's daughter. I should want him to go and yet—and yet——" She turned suddenly away and flung herself on the sands face down.

Anita sat silent for a moment. It was such a friendly, pleasant scene, so many little children, so many heads of families taking their holiday. Very near her were some children with their German *fraulein*, such a good, painstaking, homely creature, all concern for the welfare of her charges, and never relaxing her vigilance. "*Was macht, Dorot'y?*" she called. "*Ach, das ist shrecklich, so schmutzig die hände. Kommt hier, spät, spät, spät.*" Then the piping voice of the child as she ran to fling herself in the nurse's arms to be cleansed from the mud in which she had been playing, and to be sent off again with hugs and caresses and charges to leave the mud alone and play in the sand. Just such kindly, faithful creatures all over the land. One could not believe evil of a country which could produce such, a country they called Vaterland.

Lillian still lay with face hidden in her arms. Anita leaned over and touched her shoulder. "Lillian, dear,

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Lillian, dear," she said, softly, and Lillian sat up, dashing the tears from her eyes.

" I'm too silly for words," she cried, " but it came over me all of a sudden how I should feel to see Bertie march away."

" Of course I knew it was Bertie," responded Anita.

" It's always been Bertie, of course," continued Lillian,. " Oh, for years and years. We're like that in England, you know. A man tells a girl he is fond of her, and if there is no prospect of marrying soon the girl just waits, waits, and doesn't mind how many years. I know it isn't so, at least I've been told it isn't in America, that a girl doesn't consider an engagement sacred at all, and that she doesn't mind encouraging a man whether she cares for him or not."

Anita thought of her light-hearted girl friends at home; of Virgie Buchanan engaged to two men at once, of Patty Blakelock with a new admirer every month. " I'm afraid there is some truth in that," she confessed, " although of course there are many, many girls who are not that way at all. I think I must be one of the constant kind myself, for it is once and forever with me."

Lillian turned to look at her. " Tell me," she said. And Anita told.

" Well, there is one thing to comfort you," said Lillian, with a sigh, " you will not have the agony of sending your lover to the war."

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"No, but I sent him into a silence from which he will probably never come back," returned Anita, remorsefully.

The two girls sat in silent sympathy on the sands. The little nursery governess near by softly crooned an old German lullaby to the youngest of the little ones who, with sleepy eyes, rested in her lap. The waves lisped gently as they curled in along the shore. Everywhere peace. Who could dream of war?

The next day they returned to Primrose Cottage, and to the serene and happy life they had been living. That Tommy was Lillian's favorite of the dogs Anita had soon discovered, but Aunt Manning coddled Haddie, who took himself very seriously and in his lordly way claimed attentions and demanded rights which Tommy never looked for. The latter, however, was quite satisfied to receive tidbits at the hand of Lillian after meals, however much Haddie might be allowed the superior advantage of sitting by Mrs. Manning's side at table to partake of sly morsels from her plate. She denounced any such proceeding on the part of both Hotspur and Tommy, and strictly forbade them an entrance to the dining-room during meals, but Haddie could go anywhere. Anita found him one day curled up on her bed in the middle of a fresh white frock, and Tibbie, who secretly favored Tommy, next to Hotspur, told tales of Haddie's having made free use of the pillows on the couch in the sitting-room.

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Tibbie, by the way, was a constant source of amusement to Anita. Her Cockney expressions, to which were added many Sussex peculiarities of speech, invited visits to her domain which, otherwise, Anita never would have thought of making.

"That 'Addie is so dentical," she told Anita, "that 'e'll not take less'n one o' mistus' purty pillows for a bed. 'E's unaccountable dentical, 'Addie is. But 'e doan't think nothin' baout other folkses denticalness. 'E'll go slubberin' an' spannelin' over my floors when 'e's been out in the wet, an' make gurt tracks as I've to clean up. Yes, miss, 'e's unaccountable 'igh an' mighty, is 'Addie." This same Tibbie had lived with Mrs. Manning for years. At eighteen she had been wooed, married and deserted within a year and from that time she vowed she would never live in a home where there was a man. That Mrs. Manning was a widow with only a granddaughter was sufficient recommendation, and she adored both the younger and older women, giving that faithful, if somewhat arbitrary service one so often finds in old servants. She backed Mrs. Manning's opinions against those of any man, and because her "mistus" disdained any idea of war as against Mr. Kirkby's apprehensions, Tibbie flouted the idea, and her arguments, founded upon Mrs. Manning's, were voiced with decision to the butcher, the baker, as well as her special antagonist, Timpkins, "the 'andy man."

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It was one afternoon not long after the return from Littlehampton that the family were gathered for tea in the garden. Lillian and Bertie were teaching Tommy a new trick. They dearly loved to train Tommy, and he seemed to feel it was their right as well as his privilege, for he usually went through the ordeal with an air of meek submission.

Harry Warren was engaged in making a water color sketch of Anita in a lavender gown, as she sat in a big garden chair. Mrs. Beltrán and Mrs. Manning were placed before the tea table.

"Hims mus' give paw nicey," cried Lillian. "Zen be sojer boy. Give him his gun, Bertie."

Bertie put the stick in place and Lillian stuck a paper cap on Tommy's head. Tommy didn't mind the stick, but hated the cap. From his point of view it did not appear to be an ornament so much as a disgrace. He much preferred to play soldier without the cap. He shouldered his gun and gave his three cheers for the king obediently. Then came the new trick which was to be a salute to the Union Jack. Tommy was required to stand on his hind legs and when Bertie or Lillian waved the flag to wave his forepaws three times. He had come to the point of holding his pose so far as standing on his hind legs was concerned, but to get him to understand when to wave his paws was the problem.

"Hims mus' wave pawdies," coaxed Lillian.

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"Mus' be nice sojer boy and salute. Bertie, I think you'll have to snap your fingers or do something sudden like that; the poor darling ickle mans doesn't understand. Hims shall have bu'ful sugar," she repeated her coaxing. At the word sugar Tommy pricked up his ears. "Wave 'e paws." Lillian forced the limply hanging members to move up and down while Tommy, under his cocked hat, looked at her with a deprecating and puzzled expression.

Anita, with Hotspur in her lap, sat watching the pair while Harry worked diligently at the sketch. "Is that someone coming in?" he inquired, as voices sounded near.

Anita turned her head. "It is that very, very stout young person whom we met on the street last evening. She is standing at the gate talking to some one; I can't see who it is."

"Oh, that's Elly Fantine," said Harry, going on with his work. "She'll not come in. A little more to the right, please. That's it, thank you."

"What a queer name and why a name so exactly suited to the character?"

Harry laughed. "It isn't her name, really, you know. Hers is Eleanor Frances Teaness, but Lil and Bertie have hit on Elly Fantine. You know their custom is to give everybody and everything a name which they have evolved from their inmost consciousness." He squinted up his eyes as he held off his sketch.

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"They are a funny pair," commented Anita. "How is the sketch coming on, Harry?"

"Pretty well. I'd like a little more sunlight, but the sun do move. What are those two doing with his nibs?"

"It isn't Haddie, you know. They never try to teach him anything. I suppose he would resent it if they attempted it. Tommy is the pupil."

"Oh, of course. I'll not keep you much longer, señorita."

Anita smiled. "You'd better not let Aunt Manning hear you address me in that way. She is trying to forget that any of my ancestors ever saw Spain, and gives me long accounts of my English forbears, expatiates on the glories of their performances and tries to waken in me a wild enthusiasm for England."

"But you do like it."

"Of course. I love it, but I like Spain, too."

"I don't blame you. I am going there to paint, to copy Velasquez. You must tell me some nice out-of-the-way places to go, picturesque spots that painter men don't usually visit."

"I can tell you plenty of such," Anita began, but just then came the click of the gate, a step was heard hastily approaching and Mr. Kirkby, his ruddy countenance more than usually highly colored and an excited look in his eye, called out. "Where are you all? It has come! Here is the paper. War! War has come!"

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Tibbie who had come out with the tea things stood staring. "Beant so," she said defiantly, as she looked to Mrs. Manning for support of her remark.

Mrs. Manning motioned her to silence with a wave of her hand. "Hush, Tibbie," she rebuked her. "You don't know what you're talking about."

Harry laid aside his sketch. Tommy dropped to all fours, glad of escape from further training, and stood wagging his tail. Bertie ran forward with the little Union Jack in his hand. "What's this? What's this?" he cried.

Lillian snatched the flag from him and stuck it in the lattice of the arbor, where it flopped feebly. There was something in Bertie's act which struck terror to her soul. So might he run forward some day with flag in hand to be stricken down by the enemy. She dashed past Tibbie, almost upsetting her and a tray of teacups, and on to the house, into which she disappeared.

Mrs. Manning took the paper into her shaking hand, tried to adjust her glasses, then threw down the paper. "Tell us, Ernest," she said, "that will be the quicker way of getting at it. One can't waste time in wading through a newspaper."

"The Germans have invaded Belgium. They are marching on toward France."

"And Belgium?"

"Resists, of course. I knew what was coming

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when war was declared upon Serbia. We cannot allow Belgium to suffer. We shall be in it in no time."

"But are we ready?"

"No, but Germany is. She has been preparing for forty years."

Harry and Bertie wheeled around suddenly to face each other. They clasped hands, looking steadily in each other's eyes, but neither spoke a word.

"Well, war or no war," said Mrs. Manning, "we must have tea. Where is Lillian. I never could bear that German language; it always sounds as if they were spitting at one another like two cats. Where's Lillian?"

Presently Lillian came out, calm and without a sign of having passed through a storm of emotion. "Tea ready?" she said. Then she went to the arbor, took down the Union Jack and stuck it in the vase of flowers which ornamented the centre of the table. The two young men, with heads held high, saluted. Mr. Kirkby removed his hat. "God save the State," he said, reverently.

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CHAPTER XV

The News of a Day

By the next morning Aunt Manning's mind had swung back into its usual orbit. When the others came into the breakfast room she was reading the morning papers with many sniffs and humphs, then, after unbottling a vial of wrath to pour out upon the Germans, she declared that this talk of England's going to war was all humbug. "Ernest Kirkby is so sensational," she maintained. "He likes to make a telling point as if he lived continually in the pulpit. What's war on the Continent to do with us? Haven't we bother enough with Ireland without this cry of war? I don't see why you were all so excited and melodramatic over Ernest's heroics. It will be time enough to fly into hysterics when war is declared." No one ventured to remark that Aunt Manning was as excited as anyone at the news Mr. Kirkby brought, but Tibbie, coming in with fresh toast, and hearing the remarks of her "mistus," looked around with a smile of smug triumph. Had she not been the first to make her protest against premature alarm?

Aunt Manning's statements had the effect of raising everyone's spirits. Anita and her mother were willing enough to believe she was right, while Lillian's forebodings began to assume the complexion of mere con-

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jecture, so that she became quite gay and happy. "It is a fine cool day," she said to Anita, "what do you say to our taking that walk to Chichester to see Aunt Betsy Potter? We'll never get there if we don't decide in a hurry, and we've been talking about it all summer. Will you go, too, Cousin Katharine?"

But Mrs. Beltrán decided otherwise, though Anita agreed that there was no time like the present. Therefore, soon after breakfast they set off on their walk.

"We can't take the dogs, worse luck," said Lillian, as they were starting out, "for Aunt Bets has a prejudice against them, some queer sort of notion, one can't tell exactly what. Oh, she is a funny one."

Anita was curious to see this odd character who lived in that quaintest of almshouses known as St. Mary's Hospital. To reach this the girls passed behind other houses, entered a courtyard and came upon a set of little dwellings like a collection of small doll houses within a larger one. Each of these tiny places was given to the use of some worthy old woman, and yet the whole was beneath one roof.

At the door of one of these small abodes Lillian knocked and the two were immediately admitted into a cozy room by Aunt Betsy herself. She was a little, dried up, old person with shrewd, peering eyes, a skin like an apple which has begun to wither, a nose slightly hooked and a slightly protruding under lip which she moistened frequently. "Come in, come right in," she

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said, hospitably. "I knew a stranger was coming for I dropped a dishclout this marnin'."

"It is such a fine day that we thought we would walk over," began Lillian.

"Fine day, yes, but there'll be a change soon; mark my words," was the reply.

"What makes you think so?" asked Lillian.

"I dreamed last night of Peggy Stout; she's been dead these twenty years; it's a sure sign. And who's the young miss?" She peered at Anita.

"She is my cousin, Anita Beltrán," Lillian told her. "She is a great traveller, Aunt Betsy. She has come to us all the way from America, and has visited Spain and France, too."

"It queered me to know who it was, for I tells myself she doant be of Sussex. You've very welcome, I'm sure, miss."

"Granny sent you a new cap, Aunt Betsy," said Lillian, producing a package. "She thought you'd like to have it for to-morrow."

"Oh, not a Saddaday," cried Aunt Betsy, "that would be a larmentable bad time to wear it. Doant you know that one must never put on anything new on a Saddaday? I'll keep it for Sunday, if so be you doant care, Miss Lillian, and tell your mother it is an unaccountable nice cap and I'm greatly obliged to her for thinking of me. It's a gurt time since I saw your grandmother, miss."

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"She doesn't get to town very often. She's been troubled with rheumatism a little this summer, and doesn't get about as often as she used, but still she is very bright and alert, isn't she, Anita?"

"She is wonderful," Anita agreed.

The old lady nodded. "Like my old granny. She was a rare one. Lived to be ninety-eight and walked to town to the last."

"Was she the one who told you about the witches?"

"The very same. She see Pharisees, too, see 'em as plain as I see you, and they was dancin' as purty, an' makin' the grass green in circles. No doubt, miss, you've seen the Pharisees rings all about." She turned to Anita, who looked a little puzzled and turned to Lillian for explanation.

"I showed you a fairy ring the other day, you remember," said Lillian with a smile.

Anita acknowledged that she had seen the rings purported to have been made by the fairies.

"An' my granny knew a man who was cussed by the Pharisees because he spied 'em out. She did that, but she knew better than to let 'em see her that night she come upon 'em dancin' so purty, and so she slips away as secret as she could. They was liddle teenty folkses not more'n a foot high."

"But what about the witches?"

"It was only one witch, a witch woman that lived

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in the neighborhood. It was like this, miss: My mother was churning one day when in comes this Mother Dibbs. She asked my mother for a sup of buttermilk. 'I've none,' said my mother, 'for I've but just begun to churn.' The witch woman sat awhile and then went out. My mother churned and churned but the butter did never come, so she went and het a penny and dropped it in the churn. She churned and churned but never would the butter come. Then my mother het a horseshoe and dropped that in the churn but never did the butter come. She churned and churned but the butter came never at all surely, and my granny said that there were those that saw a print of a horseshoe on Mother Dibbses' arm that very day."

"Was your grandmother there?" asked Lillian.

"She was, miss; it was afore my mother was married and she was doin' the churnin'. Another time Mother Dibbs came in and asked my granny for milk, but knowin' her as one that had the evil eye, my granny refused. Mother Dibbs set and looked through the door where the milk was settin' on the pantry shelves but she said not a word, and after a bit she goes out. When my granny came to get some milk every pan was maggotty, and so it be for three days. Yes, miss, there be witches. My granny was a truthly woman, and I beant tellin' you what isn't true. My mother died when I was a wee bit o' a thing and my granny

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brought me up. Ah, there's many a tale I could tell you."

"And what do you think of the war, they say we shall perhaps be in?" asked Lillian. "Granny says it will never reach us."

"It will then: It is all in the prophecies as plain as day. You can read it for yourself, Miss Lillian."

Lillian looked a little startled at this and changed the subject. "My cousin has never been in England before this year," she said.

"She speaks English pretty good for a furriner," said the old lady.

Anita laughed. "Oh, but it is the language I have always spoken. Although I was born in Mexico I was brought up in the United States," she said.

"Ameriky? Ye've come a gurt ways, miss. And do you call yerself Spanish or American, or is it English ye'll be? My head is all queered with it."

"I would rather call myself American, although I have least claim to that," acknowledged Anita. "I love Spain, and I love England, too, but it is America which seems most my mother country, for it is there that I have been happiest and there I have suffered most."

"Ah, yes, ah, yes," sighed the old lady. "Joy and sorrow, joy and sorrow, the memories of them, and the old laughter and tears; they make a place the heart clings to. I know, I know."

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"You have always lived in Sussex?" Anita asked.

"No, my dear. I was brought up here hard by, but when I married I lived just over the border in 'Ampshire, and so I can understand that. One can bide in this place or in that, but where joy or sorrow ha' struck hardest 'tis them ye remember and want to stick by."

"You see that Aunt Bets knows life," remarked Lillian to her cousin.

'I ha' lived long and I ha' seen a deal. I see a young Spaniard once, but ye never could ha' told by his speech or looks that he was furrin. He come wid a friend who was sho'in' him the sights o' the town." Her mind reverted to Anita's Spanish ancestry. "It must be a quare pleece that Spain, all mountains and skeerce a tree they tell me."

"Oh, but it is not all like that," Anita assured her. "Some of it is as green and lovely as England."

Aunt Bets looked as if she thought that was all talk. She had heard about Spain and the report did not coincide with Anita's tale which probably was merely a boastful one.

Then it came time to go and they left the little toy house and the queer old woman who stood in her door peering after them like some old witch herself.

"Never in all my lifetime did I ever hear such a lot of queer superstitions," declared Anita when they had turned out of the courtyard. "She is positively

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uncanny. I have heard the negroes at home tell queer things, but I didn't know anyone else believed in witches nowadays."

"Aunt Bets isn't the only one," responded Lillian. "I think Tibbie half believes in them, and if not in them in a number of other strange things. Most of the country people do. I didn't like what she said about the war. I wish I hadn't asked her. She is a great one for telling you what the Bible prophesies. She pores over it. I don't think she reads anything else except a daily paper, which some one lets her have when it is a day old. She can prove almost anything by the prophecies and it is funny how she applies them to such very commonplace things. Granny will be amused when we give her an account of our visit.

"How did you discover her?"

"She is a protégé of Mr. Kirkby's. It is practically through his influence that she has that cozy little place for the rest of her days. He interested friends of his who had influence and in that way she was allowed the home. Mr. Kirkby always goes to see her when he is in Chichester, and they have long talks upon the Bible. I think he quite enjoys her odd points of view."

"How did he happen to come across her?"

"He has known her all his life. She has worked hard, generally sacrificing herself to others and always on hand to help some one in trouble, never sparing herself, and working up to the very limit of her strength,

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so that when at last she became unable to support herself it seemed only justice that she should be provided for. She is very comfortable, you see."

"Dear old thing. I should think she did deserve some sort of haven. I am afraid, Lillian, that such a reward of virtue would never be mine. I am such a selfish beast."

"Why, Nita Beltrán, how can you say so?"

"I am. I was brought up that way and if I didn't have such a good and sensible mother I should probably be worse than I am. I do think I have improved a little, but there is room for much greater."

"Who knows at last what a life may show?" quoted Lillian.

There was a chatter of high-strained voices in the garden when the two girls reached Primrose Cottage. "Who can it be?" exclaimed Lillian. "It doesn't sound familiar."

They hastened their steps, were tumultously greeted by the two dogs, and went forward to find gathered around the tea table, Mrs. Manning, Mrs. Beltrán and the two Perlitas, the latter in astonishingly youthful hats and as jaunty as ever, their accent more pronounced and their fripperies increased since they left Spain.

"We just had to come and see you," declared Miss Harriet after embracing Anita effusively. "We're going to sail just as soon as we can get passage. Our

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banker has scared us almost to death, and what we want to do is to get back home just as quick as ever we can.

"Of course you'll be going, too," spoke up Miss Agatha, "and we thought how nice it would be if we could all go over together. The steamers are so crowded, they tell us, and we thought if there had to be four in a stateroom it would be just fine if we could share it together, so much nicer that to have perfect strangers."

"It was most kind of you to think of us," responded Mrs. Beltrán, "but we are not thinking of a return as yet."

"But, oh, my dear, there is going to be danger—Zeppelins, you know, and all sorts of horrors. We feel as if we couldn't get away soon enough," Miss Harriet chimed in.

"You're sure you won't think better of it?" asked Miss Agatha. "I can assure you that our banker advised us to get away as soon as we could."

"And we came right down to Chichester to hunt you up," Miss Harriet resumed. "We shall be so disappointed not to have you join us; we quite counted on it."

"Do you want to go, daughter?" inquired Mrs. Beltrán, turning to Anita.

"Oh, no, madre, not till we find Pepé," responded

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Anita without hesitation. "If we go anywhere let it be to Spain."

"No one thinks Spain will be drawn into the war, it is true," Miss Agatha admitted, "but we shall feel safer on the other side of the water." She rose to go.

"Oh, please stay longer," begged Anita. "I want to know all about the people at the pension. How long since you left there?"

"About a month," Miss Harriet told her. "Oh, my dear, there have been quite exciting times. Such a romance; Miss Ralston, you know?"

"And Don Manuel," Miss Agatha came in.

"Of course, Don Manuel; I was coming to him, Agatha," Miss Harriet spoke and then, in duet, the tale was told.

"She treated him outrageously," from Miss Harriet.

"There was another, an American."

"A widower."

"Rather good-looking."

"Miss Ralston set her cap for him from the beginning."

"And poor Don Manuel was thrown aside like an old glove."

"He was madly jealous."

"He threatened to destroy himself."

"But of course he did not. We talked to him very seriously, like sisters."

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"Quite like sisters and——"

"He promised that he would not waste his young life."

"And bring sorrow to his family."

"It was so romantic."

"Yes, and so exciting. We advised him to go away."

"Which he did and then——"

"And then, she——"

"She, who had used him to play off against,"

"To make Mr. Stiles jealous."

"She had it all her own way and they were married."

"Yes, my dear, they married."

"Walked off one morning to the English church. I don't know how they managed it."

"But they were married and never came back to Doña Carmen's at all."

"Just sent for their luggage,"

"Which was all packed up ready to go,"

"And that was the last we saw of them,"

"The last."

"But there is a very nice young lady from Cuba there now,"

"And we think,"

"Oh, yes, we feel quite sure that,"

"Don Manual is——"

"Becoming interested in her."

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As Anita believed Don Manuel's interests did not go very deep, she felt quite sure that if the Cuban young lady failed to console him there would be others. There was a little more talk upon affairs at Doña Carmen's and then the sisters Perley declared they must go. They had told the cabman to come back for them and he was waiting outside, they supposed. Their farewells were made with girlish effusion. They charged Mrs. Beltrán to notify them if she should conclude to sail, offered to do any errands in London for them, or in America, either, for that matter, and went off trippingly, their short skirts displaying the latest mode in footgear, and their high-pitched voices shrilling good-byes after the cab had started.

"I never saw such funny women in all my life," declared Lillian, exploding with the laughter she had been trying with effort to restrain. "Don't tell me there are many more like them."

"Well, there are others," admitted Anita, "but these are not a true type; they are rare specimens, but in spite of their peculiarities they are as good as gold, and as innocent as babes."

"Such voices, and such an accent!"

"So say we all of us, yet it is the vernacular of certain portions of the States."

"But not that portion from which you come."

"No, though you will come across the nasal twang and a certain shrillness there, though not just the same

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accent. We are rather peacocky in our tones, over in the States; that is, we are as a rule. I notice it more when I am in England. Is it the fogs which give you all such soft voices?"

"Perhaps. I wish the boys might have been here to meet your Perlitas."

"Maybe it is just as well. Aunt Manning will have enough to say about them."

"And we shall have enough to tell about Aunt Bets, so we can switch her off for the present."

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CHAPTER XVI

Cousin Prudencia Writes

When the two girls reëntered the house they found Mrs. Manning in the sitting-room in a testy humor. "I do wish you'd get some fresh flowers, Lillian," she complained. "I am tired of seeing these. One would suppose that it was mid-winter or that we had to pay a shilling apiece for them," she said.

"I'll get some fresh ones," replied Lillian, "and then wishing to interest her grandmother in something else, but unfortunately choosing the wrong subject, she remarked: "We had quite a visit with Aunt Bets. She sent her thanks for the cap."

"Naturally," responded Mrs. Manning, sarcastically.

"She had her prophecies to the fore," Lillian went on, "and predicts war."

"War! It is nothing but that foolish talk. Those two silly women who have just gone—thank Heaven they did go—they had to ding it into one's ears. Can't one hear about anything else? I am sick of it. Don't stand there like a stock or stone, Lillian staring at me. I have a right to speak my own mind in my own house. War! War! Has no one a grain of sense these days? Of course we all know it's those Germans, but if they choose to be idiots is no reason why we should be. A

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parcel of sheep jumping over a fence. One goes and the rest must follow. I never knew anything so utterly foolish. I don't know what the government is thinking of to let people run about recklessly and get up this scare." She sat tapping her slim fingers upon the arm of the big chair in which she was sitting. "If this keeps on," she continued, "I'll be ready to go to America; I would even consent to go to Spain till this racket is over. From what Katharine tells me it isn't a half bad place, and they have an English queen. Do go on Lillian; I am not talking to you; I am talking to Nancy."

Lillian, with a sidelong glance at Anita, went out, and as soon as the latter could escape she followed.

"Whew!" whistled Lillian, as Anita came up. "Isn't she is a pother? Poor old dear, she is like that. She will fight an idea to which she is opposed till she drops from exhaustion. After what your Perlitas said I should never have mentioned Aunt Betsy's prophecies; it was most unfortunate. I should have known better. She will hardly be safe to live with for the next twenty-four hours unless we can get her mind off on something which concerns some one in whom she is interested."

Anita gave a long sigh. "Do you know, I believe that pother, as you call it, that capacity for getting all wrought up must run in the family, for I used

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to be the most excitable child and I am afraid I led poor mamma a pretty dance many a time."

Lillian laughed. "Well, my child, you have a living example of what it means to allow that habit to grow on you. Take warning."

"Just what I am doing," returned Anita. "How differently you arrange flowers over here, such a number of little vases all over the place."

"How do you arrange them?"

"We generally have just one or two big vases or bowls with masses of flowers in them."

"How curious. There come the boys, Nita. I'll take these in and then we will go to meet them. They will like to hear of Aunt Bets and your two visitors. Bertie loves to have me tell him about Aunt Bets."

But although the boys laughed at the account of Aunt Bets and were amused at Lillian's imitations of American accent, at the last they looked grave when they were told that the Perley sisters had been advised to leave the country.

"Looks serious," remarked Bertie after a little time in which both he and Harry were plunged in thought. "I'm afraid it's coming, Hal."

Harry nodded gravely, but Lillian cried, "Don't be croakers, you two. Because two scary old women choose to run away in a fright, is no reason why you should cry 'Wolf! Wolf!'"

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"But the wolf came at the last," Harry reminded her.

"And we hear that bookings are most difficult to get," Bertie told her. "There is a perfect scramble for them, and they are not all old women who are after them."

Lillian made no answer, but walked on ahead. "The post has come," she said over her shoulder. "I am going in to see what is in it."

She came back presently, finding Anita busy giving the boys their tea. "Your mother says she has a letter with important news in it," she told Anita. "I believe it is from Spain."

Leaving Lillian to look after the tea, Anita ran into the house to find her mother absorbed in her letters. "Listen to this, Anita," she said. "No, I will simply tell you. Pilar is dead."

"That Pilar? Well, I am afraid that doesn't grieve me very deeply."

"It is Prudencia who writes," Mrs. Beltrán went on, "and she tells me a strange thing. Your Uncle Marcos left no children, you remember."

"All his property went to his wife, I remember they told us."

"Yes, but she had use of it only for life. At her death it was to go to Prudencia's daughter and your father's son."

"Oh, mother! To Pepé?"

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"To Pepé."

"The more need that we find him. Oh, what a strange thing!"

"Is it not? It seems then that this Uncle Marcos was not so unjust as would appear. He evidently desired to restore to his two brothers, through their descendants, the property which he had wrested from them by unworthy means, and so he salved his conscience. I suppose if he had known of your existence you might have come in for a share."

"Oh, never mind me. That does not make any difference, but it is a happy thing to know that poor Pepé, who slaved and toiled so incessantly was doing so for the profit of his own lands. He will be glad, oh, I know he will be glad. Is there no other news, mother?"

"Prudencia is gratified, of course, that Amparo is so fortunate. She begs that we will come to Spain if there should be trouble here."

"But we cannot go till there is no further hope of Pepé."

"You realize, dear, that if his death is proved you are his legal heir."

"Oh, no! Then pray God I may never be. Is there nothing from Mr. Kirkby?"

"Yes, a word to say that he is starting for London to-day in order to get in closer touch with those who are best informed on political matters, and also to

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learn from the detectives what progress they have made in their search for the boy. He has theories of his own, you know, and he likes to consult these people. He will return in a few days, he says."

"I hope he may have some good news. It seems dreadful to think that Pepé must be kept in ignorance of this piece of good fortune when it would mean so much to him."

Her mother sighed. It did seem a strange stroke of fortune to come at a time when the boy seemed utterly to have disappeared, yet somehow this piece of news gave both mother and daughter a spur to their belief in his return.

"I must write to Amparo, dear Amparo," said Anita. "You will help me with the letter, won't you, mother? I can do pretty well in conversation, after Barcelona, but writing a letter is something of a task. I wonder if Mr. Garriguez knows."

"I shall write and tell him. I will do it at once."

Leaving her mother to this duty Anita returned to the garden to find Tommy going through his daily drill and Harry deep in the columns of a newspaper. Anita established herself in a garden chair to watch the training of Tommy. Haddie came up pantingly with red tongue hanging, but seeing that Hotspur had already taken possession of Anita's lap he went off to curl himself up at Harry's feet. The afternoon sun shot long rays across the garden and laid golden lights

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upon Harry's sleek head, upon the white of Anita's frock, upon Lillian's tall figure standing above where Bertie was kneeling to put Tommy through his drill. The garden was bright with hollyhocks and midsummer's scarlets and yellows of flower kind. Rooks were cawing in the tall tree-tops. A peaceful English garden beloved and well tended. Anita's thoughts flew back to another garden across the seas. Did Ira still tend it? Who cared now for its roses? She sat thoughtfully stroking Hotspur's soft fur, and dreaming of those lost hours.

Presently Tibbie came out. "If you please, miss," she said, "Mrs. Teaness is within."

"And is Miss Teaness there, too?" asked Anita.

"Both the young ladies are with their mother, miss, thank you."

Anita put down Hotspur, who stretched himself lazily and sat blinking in an offended manner as if much put upon by this sudden awakening. "The Teanesses are here, Lillian," Anita called.

"Oh, bother!" cried Lillian, "I'll come in a minute, Nita; you go in and say I'm coming."

Harry threw down his paper. "Did I hear that Elly Fantine is here? I must go in, too. I adore her."

"She is a dear, really she is," responded Anita, somewhat severely.

"There is so much of her to be dear," returned

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Harry, "so of course she should always be called dearest. Her mother is a duck, I will admit, and they do have jolly times at The Beeches. Did you ever see Elly Fan play tennis? You haven't? Then you have something to live for."

"Do you call her Elly Fan to her face?" asked Anita.

"Oh, dear, no! I call her Miss Eleanor most respectfully."

The Teanesses were old friends of Mrs. Manning as well as of her niece, who, when she was Katharine Drayton had gone to school with Mrs. Teaness, then Eleanor Fox. The old friendship had been renewed and frequent were the invitations to The Beeches. It was to invite the girls over to a small garden party that the Teanesses had now come. Eleanor, the elder of the two girls, would have been really pretty but for her all too ample proportions. She had a lovely complexion, a sweet mouth and the sunniest expression. Even though her friends made fun of her they liked her. Alicia, the younger sister, was a quiet, rather nondescript young person, a little shy, but, as Mr. Kirkby said, a good listener. Harry Warren always made a point of carrying on a most obvious and nonsensical flirtation with Eleanor, who understood him perfectly and laughed at everything he said.

"We were so afraid we should miss you," said Eleanor, as Anita came in with Harry.

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"How dear of you to say that," cried Harry.

"I didn't mean you, silly," responded Eleanor. "Anita, dear, we do hope you and Lillian can come over to our little garden party on Monday. Not much of an affair, but these days when everyone is so anxious and looks so solemn we do want to try to do cheerful things."

"I'm sure we shall love to come," Anita assured her.

"Do I come, too?" inquired Harry with mock anxiety.

"Oh, of course, and Bertie, too. I suppose he is here."

"He and Lillian are coming," Anita assured her. "They are just putting Tommy through his last stunt. Did you walk over, Eleanor?"

"No, Alicia drove us over in the car. She declares that she wants to get all the practice she can, for if there is war she means to offer her services to run a car."

"Alicia does? I can scarce believe it of her."

"She is a quiet body, but when it comes to things like that you've no idea of how daring she is."

Here Lillian and Bertie came in, and the matter of the garden party was again discussed; then the visitors declared they had come over merely for a moment's call and must be getting back. They offered to take

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Bertie and Harry in with them so far as they should be going and were off with Alicia at the wheel.

The garden party took place as planned, but it was the last affair of the kind for many a day to come, for louder and louder grew the mutterings of war, and finally it was upon them. Even when it was an actual fact, Mrs. Manning refused to believe that it could be really serious, that it would last. She was rather sarcastic when Lillian, white and shaken, announced that Bertie was leaving to go into training; that he and Harry were going in together, and she wondered if they would be called to the front very soon.

"Probably never," responded her grandmother. "This isn't going to last. Don't get into heroics, Lillian. Of course Bertie is like all young men, likes to parade around and be somebody, likes to talk big, as all boys do. Don't you worry about those boys; probably they will never get so much as a smell of gunpowder."

But as time went on she said less and less about this going to the front, was very tender with Lillian, very vehement in her vituperations against the Germans, and finally swung over altogether; was for turning the cottage into a hospital and spent all her time in knitting for the soldiers. News from the front was paramount to any other, and the search for Pepé, important as it still was to his mother and sister, sank

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into a matter of insignificance compared to this other great issue.

Across Anita's mind flitted once in a while the remembrance of her aforetime lover. Had he returned to America? What was he doing? The chance of a meeting appeared further off than ever, and she thought oftener of Bertie and Harry, for whom they were all preparing kits, than of Terrence Wirt. Her mother was casting about in her mind to discover the best use she could make of her own knowledge of nursing. She and Anita went up to London with Mr. Kirkby to inquire into matters there. It was a curious experience for the girl and one she was not likely to forget. The darkened city gave her the impression of something mediæval, something she had read about, yet there was still much to see, much to learn.

One day when she was getting into a 'bus with Mr. Kirkby she caught sight of two men getting into another 'bus. "Oh," she exclaimed, looking back, "I do believe that is Donald Abercrombie and his uncle. I felt sure we should come across them again some day. Dear me, but that does take me back to those days in Spain."

"Abercrombie, Abercrombie," repeated Mr. Kirkby. "What Abercombie?"

"I don't know where they are from, but I believe the uncle is named Bruce. Then she told of their in-

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terest in the two, an account to which Mr. Kirkby listened with interest.

"I know some Abercrombies myself," he told her. "I must look them up. Perhaps this boy belongs to the same family. Then the subject was dropped and they began to speak of Pepé. Investigations in his direction had not been very energetic of late, Mr. Kirkby confessed. There was so much else. Everyone was on the watch for German spies, but he meant to prod up the laggards and perhaps there would be news. Indeed there might be any day.

It was while they were waiting in London that word came from Mrs. Manning which hurried them back to Sussex. "Don't waste your time up there," she wrote, "when you are needed here. Mrs. Teaness is opening her house as a home for convalescent soldiers. She has two or three already and more coming. She wants you to help—says you promised."

"That is a relief," declared Mrs. Beltrán. "I do want to be of use, but the exactly right thing does not seem to offer here without delay and red tape. This means immediate need."

"I am glad," Anita said. "I would like to help, too, and perhaps I can in some way. London is so dreary and I dreaded having you go away from me. I couldn't bear the idea of your being up here alone, yet what was there I could do?"

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"I should have sent you back to Aunt Manning," Mrs. Beltrán assured her.

"Oh, no, I should have stayed, so as to be near you, but this way is much the best."

So back they went to Aunt Manning's satisfaction and Lillian's joy. "They have turned the whole house into a hospital, there at The Beeches," Lillian informed them. "Mrs. Teaness and the girls all sleep in one room and they have put up cots for the servants in the garage."

"And what are the girls doing?"

"Oh, all sorts of things. There is a lot to do, of course. What they need most is a skilled nurse who can take the supervision of things and direct the others. That is what Cousin Katharine can do. We are helping out by sending broths and things like that for the poor fellows. Either Tibbie or I go over every day, and sometimes I stay and help. It is not a regular hospital, of course, but a refuge for those who are getting better, whose hurts need time for healing and who are over the worst of it."

Mrs. Beltrán went to her post the next morning, and found occupation enough to keep busy both head and hands. Life went on upon a very different plane for them all. Instead of happy, care-free summer days, were these sober ones filled with heartache for those whose sufferings they were trying to mitigate. The Tommy Atkins upon whom their attention was fixed

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was not the little Airedale, but the true Tommy whose training meant a far more serious thing. Once in a while the dog Tommy would bring his stick to Lillian and look up into her face with wistful eyes as if to say, "What is the matter? Is my education finished?" Then Lillian would hug him to her, and hide her wet eyes in his warm coat. Haddie, however, was as lordly as ever and missed no one so long as he had the "mistus" and his bits from her plate. And so the summer passed into autumn, and autumn was bringing more appalling reports for those who watched and waited, while fiercer and fiercer grew the conflict.

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CHAPTER XVII

CONVALESCENTS

FROM this time events moved forward with greater swiftness. Bertie and Harry came down for a few days before they joined their regiment to start for the front, and though Lillian held her head high and sent off her lover with brave words of cheer she looked spent and broken for days afterward. Even poor fat Eleanor Teaness had a look in her eyes which made them all believe that she felt Harry's departure all too keenly. From time to time the invalids at The Beeches recovered and went off to make room for others. Mr. Kirkby, busy in a thousand ways, had bought a motor car and came over daily to hearten up the men waiting for time to set them on their feet again.

He picked up Lillian and Anita one day when they were starting out to visit The Beeches.

"Where are you off to?" he inquired in his hearty voice.

"We are going over to see what we can do to help them at The Beeches," Lillian told him. "One must keep busy these days if one would keep a steady mind."

"Quite right, quite right," responded Mr. Kirkby. "Jump in here and I'll take you over. I hear there is quite an influx there. Mrs. Teaness telephoned me this morning to know if I could get hold of another nurse.

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Your mother has too much on her hands, Anita, so I have been able to send a couple of good women I know of who have had some training, and are eager to help on the good cause."

"Who are the new men, Mr. Kirkby?" asked Anita.

"I didn't ask their names and had time only for a word with them. There is one poor fellow whose head was all bandaged up. They fear he will lose his sight. I want to get Meredith down to look at him. There is a chance for you girls to do some good work. You can read to him, and your music should be a solace, Anita. It must be hard for a great strong man like that to sit for hours with nothing to do and nothing to entertain him."

"I certainly will play for him and the others as well," said Anita, eagerly.

"And I should love to read to him," Lillian was quite as eager. "We can go over early every day, Anita. We will give him some of our flowers, for he can smell those. Granny strips the greenhouse every day, and is more zealous than ever about getting her plants to blossom."

"Good thing, good thing," responded the rector. "It is those little things which help almost more than the big ones."

While Mr. Kirkby consulted with Mrs. Teaness and Mrs. Beltrán, Eleanor and Alicia led the two other

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girls into the big sunny room which was now turned over to those of the convalescents who could sit there. Even in winter it was by no means an unattractive outlook from the broad windows; wide stretches of lawn still green, hillsides of gorse, rolling slopes of the Downs against the horizon, clumps of evergreen in the foreground behind which one could see whitewashed cottages, a half-hidden church, a line of shining water. The big room had been made as comfortable as possible with reclining chairs, couches, a piano, an open fire, a table of magazines, newspapers and books, while soft rugs upon the floor hushed the tread of feet which might set some fretted nerves to tingling.

The little bunches of flowers, so carefully tied up by Aunt Manning and showing a rosebud, a geranium leaf, a sprig of begonia, a touch of mignonette, were divided between the two who had brought them over from Primrose Cottage. Lillian began her rounds at one side of the room; Anita took the other. She selected the sweetest of her bouquets and carried it to a man with bandaged head who sat in the sunshine by a window. The bandages covered his eyes and chin so only his mouth and the tip of his nose were visible. A lump arose in Anita's throat as she looked at the quiet figure, so helpless, so uncomplaining. She stood for a moment before she said. "I have brought you a tiny bunch of flowers. Would you like to have me

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HE HELD OUT HIS HAND WITH GROPING GESTURE

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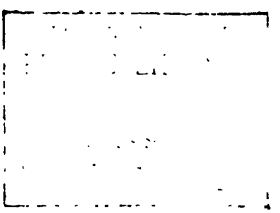

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pin it on, or shall I lay it down here on the window-sill?"

The man started at the sound of her voice and held out his hand with the groping gesture of the blind. "I'd like to take it in my hand, please," he said.

His fingers closed around it and he carried the fragrant little nosegay to his nostrils. "It is very sweet," he said. "How good you are to bring it. Flowers are so precious in winter. They always remind one of gardens one has known. I will keep it for a little while and after the nurse comes in I can get her to put it in water for me."

"Are you fond of music? Would you like me to play for you, or would you rather I should read?"

"I'd like the music immensely, and the rest of the boys can hear it, too."

"What do you like best, ragtime, classical music, or what?"

"Some times one, some times the other. Do you play Chopin?"

"Some things of his?"

"Any of his études? Number nineteen, for instance?"

"I used to play that, but I haven't done so for a long time. I will try it if you like, and if you will excuse any mistakes."

"I will excuse anything since you were so kind as to bring me this comforting little bouquet."

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Anita went over to the piano, and sat for a moment half unwilling to attempt a work which had been a favorite of hers in those long ago, happy days of her life when she was Nancy Loomis. But she thrust the memory aside and thought only of the man whose pleasure it would be to listen. She commenced hesitatingly, but gained confidence as she went on. Her effort brought applause from her little audience and one of them hobbled over to ask for more.

"That was a rattling good piece," he said, "but maybe you wouldn't mind giving us something a little more lively."

Anita smiled and nodded, then dashed off a gay Spanish dance which appeared to give great satisfaction, the man with crutches declaring that he could scarcely keep from dancing, a joke at which his comrades roared. For an hour the girl sat there, then Mr. Kirkby came to the door and called out, "All aboard for Primrose Cottage."

"Come on, Anita," Lillian cried.

Anita tarried long enough to go back to the man with the bandaged eyes. "I am coming again to-morrow," she said, "and I will try to get here earlier so I can read as well as play for you."

The man held out his hand, "I can't thank you enough," he said. "The music was wonderful. It made me both glad and sorry. I am so grateful to you."

They shook hands, bade one another a cheerful

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good-bye and Anita hurried out to where the motor car was waiting.

"I have been talking to your poor blind man," said Anita as Mr. Kirkby tucked the rugs around her. "He seems very weak yet, at least his voice sounded so."

"He was pretty well battered up, poor chap, but I am hoping we shall not be calling him blind for long. You'll go over again, I trust. The lads seemed to enjoy the music. It is a great thing to be able to contribute toward their pleasure as well as their comfort. I hope to bring your mother home to-morrow for a little rest; she is working too hard and needs it. She is too valuable to drop out. We'll get Miss Egbert and Miss Woodside to-morrow morning and they can manage without your mother for a day or two."

"I shall go over every day whether mother is there or not," Anita announced. "I am so glad to be of some use, and I promised the man with the bandaged eyes that I would read to him the next time I came. Do you know his name, Lillian?"

"No, I didn't ask. The one with crutches is named Haynes and that nice chap with the wounded arm, the one I was talking to, is named Roberts. You seemed to find your blind man the most appealing."

"Oh, I did. There was something about him that seemed to wring my heart."

"Probably your mother or Mrs. Teaness can tell you his story," Lillian replied.

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The next afternoon when the girls went again on their errand of mercy they found the patients looking for their coming. Eleanor and Alicia, already busied in fifty ways, were pleased to be relieved of this task of lightening the long hours for their convalescent guests, and turned their attention to other matters, while Anita gave herself up to furnishing music, and Lillian played games with one or two who were able to be occupied in some such way. At the end of an hour the music came to a conclusion and Anita went over to sit down by the man who had so interested her the day before. A small vase by the patient's side held the little bouquet she had previously brought him. He touched it gently as she sat down by him.

"You see I have them still," he said. "They are a great comfort."

"You shall have more when they are gone," Anita assured him. "What would you like to have me read? The daily paper, a short story, a magazine article?"

"One of the boys was good enough to read the paper to me this morning. I think I should like you to choose something like a good stirring story. I can hear quite well now, though for a time I did not."

"Are you suffering much?" Anita asked, compassionately.

"Very little now. It is only the eyes which bother and the dread that there will never be any light again for me."

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"You are so patient. I couldn't be," cried Anita, impetuously. "I do so hope and pray that you will be cured. There is hope, isn't there?"

"Oh, yes, there is hope, and I am not worse off than hundreds of others. I shall get used to it, no doubt."

Anita could not trust herself to say anything more, but turned the pages of the magazine she had brought and settled herself to read.

Presently young Haynes swung himself over to where the two were. "You don't mind my listening, too, do you, old chappie?"

"Glad to have you," was the reply, and the young man deftly drew up his chair and settled himself to listen. He was a boyish, happy-looking lad, who did not seem in the least to mind the loss of his leg, and who laughed and joked all day. The sprightly tale which Anita had selected found an appreciative critic in Bobbie Haynes, who chuckled over the witty parts, laughed outright at the amusing situations and finally pronounced it rattling good stuff.

"I'd like to have all the boys hear that," he said, so Anita offered him the magazine to pass around and went on her way with a promise to return another day with more reading matter.

As she passed out of the room one of the nurses entered. "Miss Collins," called Bobbie Haynes, "Dix wants to speak to you."

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The nurse came up. "Did you want to speak to me?" she asked.

"Dix does," Bobbie told her.

"I wanted to ask," said the other, "the name of the young lady who has been so kind as to give us some music yesterday and to-day."

"Why, that is Mrs. Beltrán's daughter, Miss Anita Beltrán," he was told.

"Will you describe her to me?"

"She has dark eyes and hair, curly hair, and quite a fair complexion considering that she is half Spanish."

"Her mother is English, not American?"

"No, she is English. She was born here in Sussex and lives with her aunt, Mrs. Manning."

"Miss Beltrán has a haunting voice," remarked the young man, putting his head back wearily. "It hasn't quite the sound of an English girl's."

"I have noticed that," replied Miss Collins. "Probably it is the Spanish influence. Are you tired? Would you like to lie down?"

"No, thank you, I will sit here. Is it dark outside?"

"Not quite yet, but it soon will be. The days are very short now." She left him and passed on to her duties upstairs where there were others more helpless still.

Meantime Anita was borne swiftly home with her mother and Lillian in Mr. Kirkby's car, and arrived to

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find Mrs. Manning quite in a flutter at having her niece back again. She had ordered hot crumpets for tea and fussed because Tibbie had them ready a little too soon. The dogs gave Mrs. Beltrán a wildly joyous greeting, and Hotspur, roused from his napping, opened a sleepy eye, and yawned, then sat up blinking but looking rather disgusted at being disturbed by all this to-do.

Mr. Kirkby would stop no longer than was necessary to gulp down a cup of tea, and then was off again saying he must get to a meeting he had promised to attend. "Not even for crumpets, dear woman," he said, lifting a protesting hand, "I must get on."

"Very well; go then," returned Aunt Manning. "We can get along perfectly well without you." So he went off laughing and charging them not to allow Mrs. Beltrán to lift a finger.

"Old Betty," said Mrs. Manning as the door closed after him. "As if I don't know how to look after my own niece. A hot crumpet, Katharine, and then another cup of tea. After that you must go up and lie down till dinner time."

There was no use in defying Aunt Manning's orders and Mrs. Beltrán meekly obeyed, but Anita went up with her and sat down in the twilight by her mother's side, after being assured that it was rest and not sleep which was needed.

"It's been so long since we had a real good talk," said the girl, softly stroking her mother's hand. "We

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have all been so busy, and there has been so much to think about. Tell me about that young man whose eyes are injured. Do you think he will regain his sight?"

"The doctor hopes so," Mrs. Beltrán replied, "though it is a very precarious case. I think they fear the sight of one eye is entirely gone."

"But with one eye it will not be so bad. He will be able to see. There are ever and ever so many persons who do as well as their neighbors, and who have but one eye. I am so interested in him. I don't exactly know why. I suppose because he is more helpless. What is his name? Somehow I haven't liked to ask him, for he evidently thinks I know it, and I've not had a chance to find out."

Mrs. Beltrán was silent a moment before she said: "He has a name which you have often heard. It is not a very common one, yet one hears it in America, too."

"But what is his name? Is there any mystery about it?"

Mrs. Beltrán took Anita's hand in both of hers. "They tell me, dearest, that he is an American," she said after a pause.

"An American? Then how did he come to be in the English army? I thought he didn't speak quite like an Englishman, but then, poor fellow, he is so bandaged up and has been so battered and bruised that no wonder his voice sounds unnatural."

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"Truth is stranger than fiction, dear child. That is a trite saying, but there is none truer. You did not recognize this young man, Nita, darling?"

"Why, no. How could I when I could see only the tip of his nose and his mouth and part of his chin? Why, mother, mother," a wild hope rushed to her brain. "No, it isn't, it could be——" she gasped.

"Couldn't be what, dear?"

Anita was trembling and her hands were icy cold. "Mother, mother," she whispered, "don't keep me in suspense. Tell me."

"Darling, I will tell you. I did not know till to-day that Terrence Wirt had joined the British forces, was wounded and is now at The Beeches."

Anita dropped her head upon her mother's hands and began to sob convulsively. "Oh, mother, oh, mother," was all she could say.

Her mother stroked her curly head but said nothing till she grew calmer.

"How long has he been here?" Anita asked after a while.

"Only a couple of days. I did not learn till to-day that he was other than an Englishman nor did I know his name. I was busy with more serious cases upstairs, and left him to the others."

"To think I have seen him, spoken to him, touched his hand, and that neither of us knew. Oh, but I did feel instinctively drawn to him that first moment. Oh,

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I did. I could not get him off my mind. I have been thinking about him ever since. He must not know. Oh, no, he must not yet."

"I agree with you that it is best he should not, for if he were to lose his sight——"

"Oh, it isn't that. It would make no difference about that. I love him more than ever. He is a hero. Think of what he has done. He has been willing to give himself for the cause of your country and mine. It is because I do not know how he may feel about me. He may care for some one else, and then I should never want him to know that I am the Nancy Loomis he once knew."

"How will you find out?"

"I don't know just yet, but I shall do it in some way."

"Does Lillian know about him?"

"She knows there was some one, but I never told her his name. We have never talked about it very much. Oh, mother! oh, mother! it is all so strange. I shall not sleep to-night for thinking of it, and how can I wait till to-morrow to see him again?"

"But, as you said, if he does not care."

"I know. I know. I am torn a thousand ways. I am distracted. I thought perhaps I might meet him some day and find that I was the one who had outgrown my feeling for him, but now, now when I have seen

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him so helpless, so patient——" She fell to weeping again.

"My darling child," her mother tried to calm her, "you must not give way in such an uncontrolled way. You will make yourself ill. I think you would better sleep in here with me and not with Lillian to-night."

"And keep you awake," sobbed Anita.

"No, I will soothe you to sleep, and then I shall sleep. Come, precious girl, dry your eyes and let us strive to be quiet for awhile before dinner so no one will suspect. You don't want Aunt Manning's sharp eyes to be looking at you with speculation. She will think we have quarreled."

"She mustn't think that. I will buck up, mother, as Bertie says, and be good."

"And leave everything to the future. To-night and always you will have your mother to love you."

"And to love," returned Anita, kissing her mother's cheek.

They sat together in the dusk till it neared the dinner hour and then they went down, outwardly calm but troubled in their hearts.

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CHAPTER XVIII

A Puzzled Patient

The visits to The Beeches now became for Anita a sort of fearful joy. If anyone noticed her solicitous concern for Terrence Wirt no one commented upon it. They were all too busy, too occupied with quite as serious cases to think these attentions anything out of the usual, and attributed them to Anita's compassionate desire to lighten a sufferer's burdens. Bobbie Haynes, provided with an artificial leg, struck out for his own home. As others became better they, too, went away and their places were taken by those more recently hurt, yet Terrence still lingered, for as yet it was not certain that his sight would return. The doctor from London favored a slight operation.

As the days succeeded one another Anita crept closer and closer into the confidence of the man who knew her only as Miss Beltrán, and he grew to look for her coming as the one bright spot in his day.

At last there came a time when Anita felt that she could ask him: "Why did you join the British troops?"

He was silent a few moments. By this time the bandages had been removed from his face all but the eyes, and the girl's looks lingered on the features she still loved, but with a new tenderness. "I went for one or two reasons," he said. "I had a fierce sense of

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justice and I felt that the Belgians should be avenged. If I could help to do it I wanted to."

"I think that was very unselfish and noble," said Anita in a low tone.

"Oh, don't think it was altogether that," he replied quickly. "I think the chief reason was because I was most unhappy. I had lost the two whom I loved best in all the world, and life did not appear particularly desirable. I didn't care much whether I was knocked out by a German shell or not. I am afraid I didn't calculate on just this sort of thing happening, or I might not have been so ready to go."

"I am so sorry about those—those two you lost." Anita's voice trembled. "Do you—can you bear to tell me about them?"

"One was my mother," he said reverently. "She died a little over a year ago. I was in France when it happened, and I did not see her, for it was quite a sudden illness."

"Oh, I am so sorry, so sorry," Anita spoke with feeling, "I can——" she checked herself from saying that she could sympathize with him because of having gone through a similar experience, and went on to say, "I can imagine what a great grief that must have been. And the other loss?"

"Is something that I should get over and probably will do so in time. Indeed, I cannot see why I do not, but I suppose I am built that way. It is the girl in the

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case, perhaps you may have guessed. She threw me over, to speak plainly."

"How horrid," Anita gave a quick gasp.

"Well, perhaps that isn't exactly so. She was so young, so full of girlish fancies, and I was too hard and unyielding. Oh, I see now what I should have done. I saw it when it was too late. I don't excuse my part of it at all, yet as I was then my uppermost feeling at the time was indignation that she should doubt me. I was hurt to the quick that she should declare my love for her was a pretence. She gave me back her ring and I went off hot with despair and injured feelings. She was 'fire and dew and spirit;' I was a youth supreme in a belief in his own opinions. I couldn't see beyond a very limited horizon. I couldn't perceive her side at all. I was just out of college and you know, perhaps, the state of mind of the just graduated college boy."

"You didn't even think of going back and trying to make up?"

"Of course, but I told myself that my pride wouldn't permit it. In my state of mind I wanted to get as far off as possible and so I came to Europe. I have been here ever since, and I have learned a lot."

"About—about—girls?"

"About life in general, about my stupid self, and well yes, about girls as a class."

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"Did you never think of going back after you had learned all these things?"

"Yes, but it would have been of no use. She left that part of the country, and I don't know whether she ever went back. Her mother died, I learned, and she went away. My sister, who used to be a neighbor of hers, removed to California and all I learned was through casual friends. Perhaps if my sister had known how matters stood she would have found out more for me."

"But she never knew?"

"No, we thought, at least N——, the girl, thought it would be so much more romantic to keep our engagement a secret, so no one knew except her mother."

"She must have been a very silly girl," said Anita, with a triumphant smile playing around her lips and with her heart beating rapturously.

"She was the most adorable girl I have ever seen. I can say that," he said with a sudden smile, "because I can't see you and I really don't know how young you may be."

"I shall never be so young as I was once," returned Anita with a little laugh.

"No more shall I. Well, it is all over now. Some day I may meet her, married, probably, but even if she were not and she still had a thought for me I could not offer her this battered up old hulk."

"You just said she wasn't a silly girl, and she would

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be worse than silly if she did not appreciate you."

"That is the loveliest, most friendly thing for you to say," declared the young man, holding out his hand. "Do you know you speak so much like her that I have been wild enough sometimes to imagine that it was she sitting here reading to me, talking to me. It was a stupid thing to imagine, but, for the moment, it has made me quite happy."

"I am so glad if I could bring you a moment's happiness when you have to live in this darkness." Anita tried to steady her voice and wondered if he observed the thrill which she realized she could not control.

"And that first day, when I asked you to play the Chopin étude, do you remember? It was one which she played the oftenest. She played marvellously well. But, dear me, I know I must be boring you. There is nothing so ungallant as to descant upon one woman's charms when you are talking to another."

"Did you learn that in Paris?" asked Anita, her laugh rippling out.

"In Paris and elsewhere. I stayed mostly in little places when I was in France; Brittany, Normandy I love. I did not mean to revert again to our late subject of conversation, but I have to say this. Not only do you speak like her but your laugh is hers over again. I could believe it Nancy's."

"Ah, her name was Nancy?"

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"Yes. It is a dear little name, isn't it?"

Again Anita laughed. She was half hysterical.

"Were you ever in the States?" asked Terrence, suddenly.

"Yes," she answered falteringly. He must not discover her yet. "I was over there with my mother a couple of years ago."

"You were not born there?"

"No, I was born in Mexico, although my father was a Spaniard from the north of Spain. We came last spring from visiting his relatives. Have you been in Spain?" She adroitly turned the conversation to this subject.

"No. I have thought several times that I would go, but not knowing the language I thought I would wait till I could come across a travelling companion who did."

Here a sudden interruption came in the person of Aunt Manning, who took a fancy to come over with Mr. Kirkby to see Mrs. Teaness. "Nancy," she called, "Nancy Beltrán, where are you?"

Anita sprang up. "It is my Aunt Manning," she said, nervously.

"Nancy," came the voice again. "Oh, there you are. I want to see that American you have been talking so much about."

Anita turned to Terrence who in his corner was half hidden by a curtain. "My aunt wants to meet you,

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do you mind?" she asked. "She is a funny old dear."

"I shall be very glad to meet her," returned Terrence courteously.

"Will you let me lead you?"

"If you will be so good."

So hand in hand they went toward Aunt Manning who stood in the doorway waiting. If Anita had thrilled before how much more did she with her hand clasped in her lover's. She wished the way were longer. She wondered if he could feel the throbbing of her pulses, the beating of her heart. But all this tumult was hidden from Aunt Manning, who was looking interestedly at the young man as he held out his hand while Anita said: "This is my aunt, Mrs. Manning, Mr. Wirt. She has been very much interested in our account of our American hero."

"Oh, don't call me a hero," cried Terrence. "I'm just like any other Tommy who happened to get hit."

"But you needn't have been," spoke up Aunt Manning. "You hadn't any cause to fight unless you wanted to, while we had."

"But I wanted to." He smiled.

"So we see," returned Aunt Manning. "I don't happen to represent any special organization and I am here entirely upon my own account, but I want to give you one English woman's thanks for what you have done."

"The thanks are worth a great deal, coming to me

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from such a source," returned Terrence, with a courtly bow.

"When you get better you must come to see us at Primrose Cottage," continued Aunt Manning. "Mr. Kirkby can bring you over; he would like to. We have a nice dog and a cat."

"Two dogs," corrected Anita.

"To be sure, to be sure. Well, Mr. Wirt, you must come over and have a cup of tea. Do you like crumpets? I'll have some for you. Come along, Nancy. I hear that horn tooting out there at a great rate. Evidently our friend, Ernest Kirkby, is getting impatient."

"I will take Mr. Wirt back to his chair and then I will come," responded Anita.

Again, hand in hand, they went across the room. Terrence felt for the arms of the chair and settled back in it. Anita stood hovering over him, longing to touch his hair, to lay her hand upon his broad shoulder. "Before I go," she said presently, "I want to add my thanks to my aunt's, not only for what you have done on the field but for the proof of friendship you have shown in confiding in me. I want you to believe that I shall respect your confidence and that it is a matter between our two selves alone."

"I do believe that. Really I don't know why I should have told you, for it is not a thing I ever speak about, but somehow I felt impelled to, and your sweet consideration and sympathy are very comforting."

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"Nancy, Nancy," came the call again, "aren't you ever coming?"

A hurried good-bye and she was gone. The young man sat there thinking, thinking. Nancy. Nancy. She was called that, and yet how could it be? The tones of her voice, her laugh, many little turns of expression, yet how could there be any connection between Nancy Loomis and Anita Beltrán? He tried in vain to imagine some situation which would explain it but failed utterly. "I'll ask Mrs. Teaness or one of her daughters, that nice pleasant one they say is so stout," he told himself.

Therefore the next time that Eleanor came in to render some slight service he said: "I wish you would tell me something about Mrs. Beltrán and her daughter. They have been so unutterably good to me that I feel interested in them beyond the ordinary."

"Mrs. Beltrán is an old friend of my mother's," Eleanor told him. "They were schoolmates in their young days, and when Mrs. Beltrán came back with Anita the friendship was resumed. Mrs. Beltrán is the daughter of a clergyman, and was born in the same place my mother was. She married a Spaniard. I believe it was not a very fortunate marriage. Mr. Beltrán died years ago. My mother never saw him, she tells us, for they lived in Mexico."

"I understand. Miss Anita was born there, I am told."

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"Yes. Isn't she a dear? We are all so fond of her. She has a charm quite unlike any girl we know. I suppose it is the Spanish element. She looks very Spanish, too. Oh, you must get well by Christmas so as to see her dance. She is quite wonderful in her Spanish dances. You must not think of leaving us before Christmas, Mr. Wirt, for in spite of these grave times we want to make a cheerful day of it, and you must help us celebrate. When do you see Mr. Meredith again?"

"Mr. Kirkby is to take me up to London in a few days. There is to be a consultation and perhaps a slight operation."

"We shall all pray hard that it will be a successful one. You will come back to us after it is over, I hope."

"If the doctors will let me, I shall be only too glad to do so. There are no words to tell of my appreciation of this haven of rest."

Eleanor moved off, but Terrence called her back. "Would you mind describing Miss Beltrán to me. We have become such good friends that I should like to visualize her better. She is young?"

"Oh, yes, not more than twenty-one or two at the most."

"And has fair hair, which she wears simply in smooth bands?"

"Oh, no, that is an entirely wrong impression. Her

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hair is quite dark and curly. Her eyes are dark, too."

"Her nose and mouth?"

"She has a nice straight nose, but her mouth is her least good feature. It isn't bad, you know, but it is rather large and just a trifle more prominent than one would choose for perfection, not at all like her mother's, so it must be like her Spanish father's."

"She is slender?"

"Compared to me she really is, but compared to my sister Alicia she is not," returned Eleanor laughing. "I suppose one might call her rather slender, and she has pretty little hands and feet."

"Thank you, Miss Eleanor, I think I can see her in my mind's eye quite plainly."

"I hope you will see her with your actual eyes before long," said Eleanor, heartily, and then she left the young man more puzzled than ever. Try as he would he could not disassociate his idea of Anita Beltrán from his remembrance of Nancy Loomis. The resemblance must go beyond the mere matter of voice and manner of speech. Her features, the color of her eyes, not the hair though; that was different. It was distracting, yet at last he came to the conclusion that it must be one of those coincidences which often do lead persons astray in cases of mistaken identity.

Anita arrived at home tingling with excitement. Her mother was taking one of her days of much needed rest and Anita flew to her room, appearing radiant, with

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eyes like stars and lips glowing. She flung herself upon her mother in a transport of happiness. "Oh, madre, madre," she cried, "I have discovered why he went to the war. It is wonderful, wonderful. I never dreamed it could be so. Oh, I am so happy."

"Who is he and why are you happy?" asked her mother, smiling.

"Terrence, you know; it is because of Terrence. He told me to-day all about it. He was so unhappy and he didn't care what became of him, at least that was part of the reason. He had lost his mother, poor darling, and he had lost me and so he was ready to do anything reckless, but he did go on principle, too."

"And does he know you to be the Nancy he used to know?" Mrs. Beltrán asked, rather anxiously.

"Oh, no. I don't want him to know at once. Somehow I do not, for he is too honorable to offer himself to anyone while he is uncertain about his sight, yet I know, I know that he has not forgotten, and I shall marry him, eyes or no eyes."

"But, my dear, my dear, that is too serious a matter for you to decide. How could you support him with your small income, even granting that it would be a wise thing to do?"

"Oh, he has enough. Did I never tell you that he has quite a nice little income, not a great one, but enough? How could he have stayed over here all this

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time without? I have never thought much about that part, for I don't believe I am mercenary."

"I don't believe you are," returned her mother, smiling, "but the same cannot be said of some other things; you certainly are an excitable young person. How did he happen to tell you all this?"

"I don't know. He said he was impelled to, that he never did speak of it, but that somehow he wanted to confide in me, in *me*. Think of it. Oh, I can tell you that it was as much as I could do not to let him know who he was talking to. Was I deceitful, I wonder."

"Perhaps you were somewhat so, but if all goes well and he returns from London with his sight restored I think he will forgive the deceit."

"You like him, mother, after seeing him and knowing him as a nurse does a patient, you do like him, don't you?"

"I like him very much indeed, more and more as I know him better."

"You darling to say so. You will have two sons instead of one, and we shall all be so happy together."

"Two sons? Ah, my dear, my dear, if I could but be sure. I am beginning to fear that our quest will never come to anything."

"Oh, yes it will. Mr. Kirkby told me to-day that he believed he had another clue and that he would follow it up at once. He is going up to London with

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Terrence, you know. Wouldn't it be dreadful if I were to forget and call him Terrence to his face?"

"Do you think he would be offended if you did?"

"Perhaps not so much offended as astonished. Do you know I am rather jealous of myself. I am suddenly seeing myself as a rival. Isn't that ridiculous? He knows me as Anita Beltrán, a girl whom he has been acquainted with but a short time and here he goes to work and confides in her; it is always a bad sign. Suppose he should fall in love with Anita and forget Nancy."

Her mother put back her head and laughed heartily. "No one but your fanciful self would get hold of such a notion. If you think there is danger of your becoming unhappy over such a situation I would advise you to avoid it by telling him that you are both Anita and Nancy."

"I think I shall, but not till he returns from London. He will meet me but once in the meantime. Mother, dear, there is one thing I do wish you would ask Mr. Kirkby to promise you."

"And what is that?"

"I want you to make him promise to let you know every day how Mr. Wirt—I'd better call him that—how Mr. Wirt is getting on. You can do it with perfect reason as he has been here under your charge for so long. Will you?"

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"I think I can promise to ask him, but I cannot promise that he will perform."

"I shall be satisfied with your part of the promise. Mother, I wish you could have seen how startled he, Terrence, Mr. Wirt, I should say, how startled he looked when Aunt Manning called me Nancy. She was dear. She wanted to meet him and she asked him to come to see us here at Primrose Cottage. Oh, mother, if he were to be well enough to come to us for Christmas."

"Did she ask him?"

"Not for Christmas, but I believe she would if I wanted her to. Wouldn't it be glorious if he and Pepé should both be here. Even this dreadful war wouldn't prevent our being happy then. Dear me, it is dinner time and I am not dressed. Don't hint at anything I have told you. I had to tell my own darling mother. Do you care, madre, that I can't help thinking of mamma in this? She would be so glad."

"My dear, of course not. My feeling for her is one of deep gratitude and reverence. Even if you loved her best I should think it only right."

"I love her very dearly, but somehow when you know that your very, very own mother has come into your life, and that she is such a mother as you are, you cannot help giving her the best love." She stopped long enough to give one kiss and then flew off to change her dress.

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CHAPTER XIX

My Boy!

That Aunt Betsy Potter should have anything to do with the destinies of the Beltrán family was furthest from anyone's calculations, yet from humble sources may spring great events, and Aunt Betsy, as many times before in her life, was the agency through which good came about.

It had never occurred to Anita and Lillian that the young Spaniard who had called on Aunt Betsy and of whom she had spoken to the two girls, might possibly be a person whom it would be worth while to inquire about, but with Mr. Kirkby it was different and he, being a most thorough person, was not going to let this Mr. Abercrombie drop out of sight without more investigation. He reasoned that if Mr. Abercrombie and his nephew had been in Chichester, probably they knew some one there. He would ask each one of his acquaintances about it, even Aunt Betsy. It might very possibly be he who had called with the nephew, or stay, it might not be the nephew, after all, but some friend of his and one or the other might know something of Pepé, for had he not left Spain in company with an elderly Englishman? Very possibly they had met. It would do no harm to inquire. As it happened, the first person

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to whom he did put his questions was Aunt Betsy Potter.

"What about this visitor from Spain you had awhile ago, Aunt Bets?" the rector began.

"The young man, sir? It was some time ago. 'E was a fine upstanding young man."

"He came with his uncle, did he not? Do you remember his name?"

"It's been such a time, sir, that I'm afraid I disremember the name. The gentleman 'e came with is a furriner."

"A foreigner? I didn't know you were acquainted with any foreigners."

"Oh, yes, sir. This one be from the States, sir. 'E boarded with me years ago when I lived in 'Ampshire. 'E was with me one summer for several weeks, and 'e be always sending me purty pictur cards. I've a gurt pile of 'em. 'E's an unaccountable kind man. I've known 'im on and off for a gurt many years."

"Where is he now?"

"I think 'e be in Lunnon, sir. I'd a pictur from there, the last time. I dunnamany I 'ave, and I've them in a gurt book 'e gave me."

"I should like to see the book, Aunt Betsy."

"So you shall, sir. I pastes some in and some I slip. The last be just loose, for I've not taken time to do them all."

She fumbled around in an old oaken chest and

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brought out the book carefully wrapped in a gay handkerchief, probably a souvenir, a fairing of long years gone by.

Mr. Kirkby turned over the pages. He gave but a cursory glance to the first ones, but lingered more observantly over the last. "Do you mind if I take down some of the addresses from these?" he asked.

"Lord bless you, no, sir. I'd be proud to have you do it."

Mr. Kirkby took out his note-book and carefully copied a half dozen or so of the addresses, while Aunt Betsy said, "Read any you like, sir."

"How is it that I never heard of this gentleman?" asked Mr. Kirkby.

"Well, I don't know, sir. Mayhap you doant be round when 'e be. There was a gurt many years 'e didn't come at all, after 'e was married, then when 'is wife died 'e took up travellin' again, an' 'e comes 'ere to Chichester and finds me."

Mr. Kirkby put his note-book carefully away. It might be a false clue, but it might be the exact one. Aunt Betsy could not remember much about those things which had happened recently, but of the things of long ago she loved to speak in detail, as do most old persons.

A few days later, in company with the good rector, Terrence Wirt went up to London. If their talk had happened to fall upon the subject of Anita in all prob-

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ability Terrence might have learned a great deal, but they spoke of the war, of Terrence's part in it, of present dangers and future hopes, so that Anita's secret was still her own.

The first news from the rector which came to Primrose Cottage gave hope of a successful outcome of the operation. "The doctors now think that he will in all probability gain the sight of one eye; the other is doubtful. It must be some time before it can be determined. In the meantime he remains in the hospital where he can be under constant observation."

This was encouraging enough, but lengthened the time which must pass before Anita would meet him again. However, something happened meanwhile which would have set aside entirely a matter of less concern to the girl, and did make everyone else lose sight of Terrence Wirt for the time being. Mrs. Beltrán, who continually gave of herself more than her strength would allow, was obliged to give up a continued residence at The Beeches and, at the solicitations of all her friends, consented to call herself merely a consulting nurse, and to remain at Primrose Cottage except on such occasions as appeared absolutely necessary. The two competent nurses whom Mr. Kirkby had looked up were now so well trained that they could manage very well, as none of the cases required constant vigilance, so Mrs. Manning was well satisfied at having both

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Anita and her mother at home for Christmas, now fast approaching.

It was one day about the middle of December that Anita was about to start out to post some letters when she was met at the door by Mr. Kirkby. "Turn back, young woman, turn back," he said. "You are not to go out. Where is your mother?"

"Upstairs. Do you want to see her?"

"I do most decidedly."

Anita started to call her. "Wait a minute," said the rector, and then as they entered the sitting-room she saw there was some one with him, a tall young man whose face was most familiar. She smiled a welcome.

"Do you know who this is?" asked Mr. Kirkby, looking from one to the other, and rubbing his hands in sheer pleasure.

"Why, yes," answered Anita. "It is Mr. Donald Abercrombie, who used to be our neighbor in Barcelona. We have met several times but have never spoken."

"You are sure it is Mr. Donald Abercrombie?" said the rector, chuckling.

"Why, yes, at least——" Anita paused, for both were laughing. "Isn't that your name?" she asked the young man, "and if it is not, what is it?"

"It is José Maria Beltrán," came the answer.

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"Pepé! My brother!" cried Anita and flung herself into his arms.

"My little sister, my little sister, *mi hermana,*" murmured the young man, holding her close.

For a moment Anita stood clasped in his embrace and then broke away. "Mother! Oh, I must call mother. It is cruel to let her wait a moment." She ran to the stairs and began the ascent, crying out, "Mother, mother, come quick" at each step. Her voice, vibrating with joy and excitement, still held a sob in it. She almost dragged her mother down the steps, repeating, "Mother, oh, mother, at last, at last!" She opened the door of the sitting-room where the two men stood waiting. "See, see," cried Anita, "it isn't Donald at all. It is not his name."

For a moment the mother stood, gazing intently, taking in every detail of the young man's face. He stepped forward, holding out his hands, all the longing of his motherless years in his eyes. "Mother," he whispered.

She gave one cry: "My boy!" and was sobbing on his breast.

The rector was wiping his eyes and muttering something about the hand of Providence, something which no one listened to, he caring nothing whether they did or not, when the door opened and Aunt Manning stood on the threshold. "What's all this to-do?" she began. "I thought somebody had fallen down stairs."

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Anita began to laugh hysterically, but she ran to her and began to explain. "It was I, Aunt Manning. I wasn't falling. I was—I had to get mother here as quickly as possible."

"Then somebody is hurt."

"Oh, no; oh, no." Anita wrung her hands in futile excitement.

"Tell me what she is talking about, or at least trying to," Aunt Manning turned to Mr. Kirkby. "Is it that young man who is hurt? Who is he?"

"He is Pepé, my brother Pepé," cried Anita.

"I don't believe a word of it," declared Aunt Manning. It was too new a fact for her to accept at once. "Pepé, such a name. Why don't you call him Joseph? Come here, young man, and I'll look at you. I can soon tell if you are an impostor. Pepé, such a silly nursery sort of name."

Mrs. Beltrán, clasping her son's arm, turned him around to face the old lady. "This is our very dear Aunt Manning," she said, "your great-aunt, my son."

Aunt Manning looked him up and down. "Drayton all over," she decided finally. "Not a speck of Spanish anywhere that I can see, and I hope he will drop that ridiculous Spanish name."

"It is a long time since anyone has called me by it," replied Pepé, in excellent English. "My good friend, Mr. Abercrombie began by calling me Don José, in a

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sort of sport, but it soon came to be merely Don, and so he has called me for a long time."

"It was just that which fooled us," cried Anita. "We heard him call you so in Barcelona, and you looked so English that we made up our minds that you must be named Donald, especially as you called him uncle."

"It is his wish that I do so. He is such a friend as I never had in all my life before."

"And where is he now?"

"He is just returned to the United States. I hope he may reach there safely."

"How does it happen that you did not go with him?"

"I should have done so but for this good friend," he laid his hand on Mr. Kirkby's arm. "He has discovered me just in time."

"Well, sit down here and tell us all about it," commanded Aunt Manning. "See where Lillian is, Nancy. She must not lose this. You might as well stop and tell Tibbie to make crumpets for tea, or scones, or something, a lot of them. Men are such hearty eaters. I have fed Ernest Kirkby before."

Anita sped on her errand and was soon back with Lillian who was duly presented to this new cousin and who was well nigh as excited as Anita herself.

"Joseph is going to tell us his story," announced Aunt Manning, "and don't either of you girls interrupt

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him by silly questions." I am glad he can speak English."

"I think you know something of my life before I arrived in England," Pepé began, "of my stay with Uncle Marcos, of my work in Barcelona. This good gentleman has told me that you know so much. It is after my meeting with Mr. Abercrombie that you do not know. He takes a fancy for me," Pepé was still a little awkward with his prepositions, "and brings me with him. He has business in Spain, in England, but he is lonely since the death of the wife, and wishes a companion who can perhaps be of use to him. He likes my little violin, and plays well himself, so we journey together. He has taught me many things. I owe him much. Because of the loneliness he wishes that I call him uncle, Uncle Bruce, and as you would say as a nick-name he calls me Don, always Don. Now that this war has come he must return to his country, but we hope to meet again."

"Was he disappointed that you left him to go alone?" asked Anita.

"Now, what did I say?" Aunt Manning cried. "Of course he was disappointed. I knew one of you would ask some silly question."

Pepé eyed this outspoken great-aunt rather distrustfully. He had not been happy in his experience with great-aunts, but Anita was not to be downed, and shot out another question, "Had you any idea before you

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saw Mr. Kirkby that you had a mother and sister living?" This time Aunt Manning made no criticism. It was a perfectly legitimate inquiry.

"I thought perhaps the mother, the sister, no. I had never heard of her, you see."

"And I have known about you for over two years," said Anita, wistfully. "We have much to learn about each other. Did Mr. Kirkby tell you of how we searched for you in Spain?"

"Something of it."

"To think," Mrs. Beltrán spoke," that we should have been so near you there in Gracia, so near that we saw you every day and spoke of you so often. I was much drawn to you then, my dear son, but I did not know why; I thought it was because you reminded me of my English cousins, of English lads, but all the time it was that my heart recognized you when my eyes did not."

"What I am curious to know," said Lillian, "is how Mr. Kirkby discovered you."

"Exactly what I was going to ask," cried Aunt Manning. "Was it through the detective in London, Ernest?"

"No, he was working on the supposition that an Englishman was responsible for the boy's coming to this country. I don't know by what process my mind formed the theory that the Abercrombie who visited old Mrs. Potter, and brought with him a Spanish lad

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might possibly be the man we were seeking, but it was around that possibility that my train of thought seemed more and more to move, and when I questioned her I was convinced that there might be something in it, so I took down the addresses on the last batch of post-cards she had received from Mr. Abercrombie and thought I would try to follow him up, beginning at the address on the card last received. It happened to be a picture of a hotel in London which I argued he might well be stopping at. It was there I went first. He was not there, but I received his address at Southampton from which port he was about to sail, and there I caught him. Like the fine fellow he is he urged this young man to make no delay in reaching his mother, and so we made our farewells and took the first train for Chichester."

"It is wonderful, wonderful," said Aunt Manning, thoughtfully, "but why did you always act upon the supposition that this Mr. Abercrombie, or whoever might be Joseph's friend, must necessarily be an Englishman?"

"In Spain those who speak English are called Ingles. Everyone who told us of this friend of Pepé's said he went with an Ingles to England. As they went to England, naturally we thought only of his being an Englishman," Mrs. Beltrán explained.

"Why in the world Lillian and I did not think of making further inquiries about Aunt Betsy's Spanish

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visitor is more than I can see," remarked Anita. "I, at least, knew my brother had been in Chichester. It is strange how one will let a thing like that slip through the fingers."

"It is because we are so given to following up a pet theory and lose sight of any other while the one occupies our thoughts," said Mr. Kirkby. "One has to look on all sides in order to perceive a small truth as well as a large one. Ah, here comes the crumpets."

They were taking their tea when Mrs. Beltrán said to her son: "Mr. Kirkby has told you, I suppose, that your Aunt Pilar is dead."

"No, I did not tell him," Mr. Kirkby interrupted. "I left all that to you, Katharine."

"She is dead? Tia Pilar is dead?" exclaimed Pepé. I am sorry, my mother, that I cannot sorrow for her. I should, I suppose, for although she did it grudgingly and because Uncle Marcos demanded it, she did look after me when I was a child."

"Yes, but how did she do it?" asked Anita, indignantly. "Not so kindly as one would care for a dog, certainly not so well as the dogs here are cared for."

"Pepé looked at her and smiled. "Then you perhaps have heard some things."

"We have heard quite enough and have seen enough of her to feel anything but kindly toward her," Anita rejoined. "I shall never forgive her, never, for with-

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holding from our mother the information which would have spared her so much sorrow and you so much unhappiness."

"I do not understand," Pepé looked up with a puzzled expression.

"You do not know that our mother wrote to her years ago and that the answer from this Pilar was that she knew nothing of you."

"I did not know this. No, I did not know this. She was always most severe in speaking of our mother. I could not bear to hear her, and so I never did mention the name of mother to her."

"That is what rouses my indignation," cried Anita, clenching her hand. "To think that they should have set you against your dear, sweet mother, that they should have believed evil of her." She spoke passionately.

Her mother laid a restraining hand upon her arm. "Never mind that, dear," she said. "It is all past. At last we are together. Let the dead past bury its dead. Should you like to go back to Spain to live, Pepé?"

"Joseph," cried Aunt Manning. "Don't call him Pepé. It's all this treatment of your mother, Joseph, that has set me against Spain. I suppose it is unchristian when there are those Germans behaving so outrageously toward everybody, yet when a thing strikes directly home and touches those you love you

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do feel that you want to vent your spite upon something or somebody."

"Spain is not so bad," returned Pepé, smiling. "I have no unkind feeling toward Spain, but I should not want to go back there to live. I have been there too unhappy."

"But you will have to go back. Tell him, mother, why he must," Anita spoke.

Then Mrs. Beltrán told him about his Uncle Marcos's will, and of how it affected him and his little Cousin Amparo."

"*Madre de Dios!*" exclaimed Pepé, reverting to his familiar Spanish. "How strange is all this. I am in a dream. I sleep. I am not awake. I cannot believe. Yet, that Uncle Marcos was not so unkind. He made me work, yes, too hard, but while he lived he had a fondness, a sort of fondness for me. He was miserly, but not so as the wife, nor so unkind. I see he wished me well. I cannot believe that I, the poor boy, the poor working boy, now am possessing that land upon which I slaved. It is too incredible. I shall have to go. Yes, I shall have to go to Spain for a time, perhaps, only for a time."

"And I shall go with you, my son," said Mrs. Beltrán. "We know them all, all who were your friends, and we have other friends whom you do not know and who will be so glad to see you, to learn that at last we have found each other."

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"We must send a card to that good Tito Alvarez. We must do it to-morrow. We must each send him a Christmas card," said Anita.

"Tito? Tito Alvarez? You have met him?"

"Yes, we have met him and Anselmo, your friend Anselmo as well. Each has helped to link the chain together which finally drew us to you."

"But it was poor old Bets Potter that supplied the final link," said Aunt Manning. "Who could ever have thought it! One never knows what time and patience will bring."

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CHAPTER XX

Opened Eyes

Mr. Kirkby carried Pepé off to the rectory where he insisted he should remain as long as he stayed in England. "You shall see the boy every day," he promised Anita and her mother, "but I want him myself some of the time. You won't refuse me that, Katharine."

"After all you have done, all that we owe you, is there anything we could refuse you?" said Mrs. Beltrán. "Such a wonderful friend as you have always been, Ernest. I don't feel as if I had words to express my gratitude to you for your supreme goodness to me now and always."

"Tut, tut, tut," cried Mr. Kirkby, taking her hands in his. "You know, my dear Katharine, that nothing in the world has brought me such exalted happiness as the fact that partly through my efforts your boy is restored to you. As for the other things, well, they have given me happiness, too, so please say no more about that."

"I do believe you are the best man in the world, Ernest Kirkby," said Mrs. Beltrán with tears in her eyes. "I hope some day we, my children and I, can do something for you."

"You are doing something every minute, and you are doing a big thing to let me have the boy."

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"Then I shall not say another word about his remaining with you, Aunt Manning to the contrary notwithstanding."

"Aunt Manning wants too much," replied Mr. Kirkby, and went off laughing.

Boxes for the lads in the trenches had been prepared and sent off, Lillian taking especial interest in the preparation. So far neither Bertie nor Harry had been in an engagement. They wrote cheerfully and in detail, but who knew what day might come direful news. Everyone in the household contributed to these Christmas boxes, even the dogs and Hotspur, for Lillian wrote letters, very characteristic ones indeed, purporting to come from each of the little creatures, and they were signed with the impress of a damp paw. "Hims autodas," Lillian said of Tommy's. A packet of snap-shots went along with the other things, one of Pepé being included. Another box went from The Beeches, a touching little note for Harry, slipped in by Eleanor, made him thoughtful and rather unhappy.

Reviewing past years, explaining situations, getting acquainted, gave occasion for many long talks with Pepé. When his mother was not absorbing him Anita was, until Aunt Manning testily declared that they were too selfish for words. Did they think she had no rights at all? At her age to be set aside in this way was ridiculous. Her inclination was to coddle him, to lavish everything possible upon him, to make a matter of

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great importance his likes and dislikes. She could not forget the hardships of his boyhood and wanted to do her part in making up for it.

"This Aunt Manning," said Pepé to his sister, one day when she had been solicitous beyond the usual, "she has, what is it? She has a very large bark, but the bite is of no consequence."

"She has no bite at all," responded Anita, "it is at the most a mere harmless nibble."

Pepé's English was usually quite correct, but he twisted his expressions sometimes and pronounced words a trifle peculiarly. He was quiet and unassuming, but keen and active mentally. He had taken in knowledge in gulps, and having a retentive memory had acquired more than many a young person having greater advantages. This thirst for information delighted Mr. Kirkby, who added to Mr. Abercrombie's training a supplementary course under which Pepé advanced by leaps and bounds. His devotion to his mother was pathetic. The stunted affections of his childhood once started grew rapidly. It seems as if he could never make up to his mother for those years of hard suspicion. With Anita he was somewhat less confidential. She was a new element, one who had not been reckoned for, yet day by day their affection for each other increased and under Anita's exuberance and her expressions of pleasure in him he expanded visibly.

"You are a dear," Anita said to him one day, "I

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always hoped you would be, but I used to have terrible fears about you."

"How else?" said Pepé. "You knew of me only as a workman, a poor laborer, a factory hand. I am not surprised at that. Yet all the time I wished not to be as I was. I wished to be a gentleman. I wished for books, for music, for those things which one cannot gain by working only in a field. I do not despise this at all, but it is not what I longed for."

"It is like a fairy tale," declared Anita. "Pepé, there is one thing I wish you would tell me. I hope I am not too curious, but that day when we saw you in the cathedral, you remember that we told you how we even touched you in passing, were you praying for—for us?"

Pepé smiled and took her hand. "I was; at least I was praying Our Lady to give me mother-love. I who had never known a mother, desired this sort of affection. I felt the need of it. The dear and good Abercrombie, yes, he was like a father, but at times there comes a wish for such comfort as only a mother can give."

Anita laid her cheek against his hand. "That prayer was answered, Pepé, and you have a sister's love, too. I loved you as soon as I knew of you, and I pictured you to myself, not very clearly, to be sure, but still you looked somewhat as you do, and always when I saw him whom I called Donald, I thought of

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you, and said to myself: he will look much the same. Once or twice I had a sudden belief that he might be you, but I put it away. There has been much confusion of names. Those things come in waves, I suppose. I was Nancy Loomis and am now Anita Beltrán. You whom we called Donald Abercrombie have become our own Pepé Beltrán." She threw her arms around his neck and kissed his cheek. "You do love me a little bit, don't you, brother?" she said, wistfully. "You are getting used to me?"

He put her hand to his lips. "I love you very much. Every day I awake and say: I am so rich. I have a mother and a sister whom I love."

"We can do many things together," Anita went on. "We shall do our music together, you with your violin; I with the piano, and we can dance. Do you know the *jota?* Of course you do. Oh, Pepé, I remember that I promised to do some Spanish dances at The Beeches to entertain those poor soldiers. Will you come, too? With your violin? We can dance the *jota* together and some other things. I have some music. I must hunt it up and take it over for Eleanor to practice. She can do that sort of thing very well. Will you do it?"

"I will do so very gladly. I have not been one to dance very often, but one who lives in Spain cannot help but know the dances. All Spain knows how to dance."

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"I have an *aldeana* costume which I have made. I wish you had one, too. Perhaps we can get up one in time. Mother will help. She will like to. We will see about it at once. And your music, it will add so much, will give so much pleasure. There is Mr. Kirkby tooting his horn to let you know he has come. He is rather early it seems to me."

"We go to Chichester, to the old lady who has the post-cards. Mr. Kirkby wishes that she see me. He has told her of the part her post-cards have played in this drama."

"Of course then she wishes to meet you again. Run up and say good-bye to mother and Auntie while I keep Mr. Kirkby quiet."

She ran out to where the car was standing. "What news, your riverince?" she asked.

"Good news," he replied. "Our friend Terrence Wirt is promised his release from the hospital in time for him to spend Christmas with us."

"That is good news," responded Anita, catching her breath. "His eyes, what about his eyes?"

"One is quite right; the other has a bit clipped out of the sight, so it will be of little use to him, but to see at all, and he certainly does, that is great, isn't it?"

"It is great, indeed. When do you think he will be here?"

"By Christmas Eve, he says. The doctors think he would better get to some sunnier climate for the rest

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of the winter, for he needs to be out of doors. Where's that boy?"

He is coming. He just went up to say good-bye to mother. It is very harrowing, this daily separation," she laughed. "Between mother and Aunt Manning. I am afraid he will get so spoiled there will be no living with him."

"You're jealous, miss, that's what the matter."

"I'm not. Don't you dare to say such a thing. Imagine my being jealous of my brother whom I have longed for all this time," she said indignantly, and Mr. Kirkby laughed.

"Nice lad, nice lad," he said, "so is young Wirt. There are a number of good people left in the world, my child."

"I don't need to be told that when I see one of the very best before me," she retorted.

"Coals of fire! Coals of fire!" he cried, lifting his hands. "Here comes the boy. Will you go along, too, to Chichester? We are going to call on Aunt Bets."

"No, thank you. I promised to go over to The Beeches with Lillian."

She waited till the car had turned a corner and then went in to hunt up her mother. She found her busily and happily occupied in mending something of Pepé's. "He is coming, coming, do you hear, blessed mother? He is coming on Christmas Eve."

"Pepé is?" queried her mother, snipping off a

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thread. "Was there any question about it? I know Aunt Manning expects him to join us."

Anita went over and took her mother's head between her hands, kissing the top of it. "Oh, you precious thing, I acknowledge that Pepé is a most absorbing subject, but there are others, there are others. It is Terrence who is to come. You must ask Aunt Manning to have him here at once. He can see, mother, he can see. Mr. Kirkby has just told me. One eye is all right and the other is not absolutely lost to him."

"I am glad, very glad, daughter dear, for him and for you."

"And you will ask Aunt Manning? I must hunt up a piece of music to take over to Eleanor, a *jota* that she will want to practice for Christmas Eve. Pepé and I will dance it together, and I must show her how to get the swing of it. Oh, mother, we must try to get up an Asturian costume for Pepé. He will look so well in one, and it will add so much to the dance." She began searching around in her trunk for the music which she presently found and laid aside, then she rose to her feet with a frock hung over her arm, a soft blue *crêpe de chine*. She carried it to her mother. "Don't you think I might wear this when Terrence comes?" she asked. "I have worn sombre colors for so long, and my heart sings so, sings so that I want to do something to express my joy. I brought this with me because I could not bear to leave it behind. It is a

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little out of style, but not much so, because it is so simple. It is Terry's favorite of all my frocks."

Her mother smiled. "And so, you sentimental child, you brought it along and want him to see you in it when he meets you."

Anita smiled, too. "You looked right into my heart that time. I do want to wear it. Don't you see how he will recognize it and then will be sure that it is his Nancy."

"A nice dramatic situation. Very well. I see no reason why you should not wear it, for certainly you have worn sober colors long enough, and I, for one, shall be glad to see you in something more cheerful than grays and lavendars. Leave the dress here and I will look it over and see if it is in proper condition for you to wear on Christmas Eve."

"I should like to have a hat on when he first sees me," said Anita, thoughtfully, as she picked up the pieces of music she had selected, "then he would not be so much puzzled by my dark locks."

"I see. You want to appear before him as a vision of delight. Well, my child, there is no special objection to your planning out a dramatic scene, though, for my part, I think it would be better to have the meeting come about in a perfectly natural way. If you should happen to have a hat on well and good, but if there is no cause for wearing it at that particular moment I don't believe I would go to the length of putting one on for

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the occasion. It appears too theatrical to try for a sensation."

"You are right, as you always are," Anita acknowledged. "I should be really very full of humility and thankfulness instead of letting my imagination run away into such a groove. I will not wear even this frock if you think it would be best not to," which speech showed that Anita Beltrán had improved upon Nancy Loomis.

"I advise you to wear it by all means," her mother replied.

Anita gave a sigh of content and went off with the music, but at the door she turned back to say. "You won't forget to ask Aunt Manning. It is only a few days off, only a few days, do you realize? Oh, mother!" She dropped the pile of music on a chair and ran to give her mother a hug and kiss. In spite of the war, and all that, we are happy, aren't we, mother? What wonderful things have been given to us. Together, you and Pepé and Terrence and I. We should be happy, shouldn't we?"

"My darling child, of course we should be. I never had your faith and hope, but it was all justified. Now run along, for I hear Lillian calling, and Tommy Atkins, too."

Anita sped away to find Lillian at the foot of the stairs with Tommy barking furiously, his way of calling when Lillian gave him the order.

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"I saw Signor Verdi to-day," Lillian told her. As the little green lizard had been in retirement since cold weather began this was quite a piece of news, and Anita responded accordingly, adding "I have a bigger piece of news than that. I will tell you as we go along."

"It must be exciting, judging from your looks," replied Lillian.

"I've a right to be excited," returned Anita in joyous tones, and then she disclosed to her cousin the secret which she had kept from her all this time ending up with, "I made up my mind not to tell a soul until I knew about his eyes. Only mother has known and she advised me to tell no one else at first. I shall tell no one else but Pepé. Isn't it wonderful, Lillian?"

"It is very wonderful and I am so glad for you. It is strange that so much comes into some lives and into others nothing," she said sadly.

"Oh, but my dear, a great deal has come into yours, hasn't it?"

"Yes, of course, but my every moment now, sleeping and waking is filled with anxiety."

"I know what that means, for I have been anxious, too. It was so uncertain about Terry's eyes."

"And he is coming for Christmas, you say?"

"Yes, we expect him, and, Lillian, I am so bothered about that first moment of recognition. It would be so awkward if everyone should happen to be right there, and how in the world can I manage to see him alone for those first few moments?"

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"If I see him coming before Granny does I will get her out of the way, into the greenhouse. She is always perfectly safe in there pottering over the plants."

"You are a dear. We will have to be on the watch."

Lillian laughed. "There is no fear but that you will be," she returned.

But as it happened neither one of the girls saw Terrence arrive, for he came in the morning when even the blue dress was a thing not suitable to be worn at that hour. Anita and her mother were busy in trying on the Asturian costume which they were making Pepé. Lillian was out with the dogs, and so it was Aunt Manning who received the visitor. She sent Tibbie up to say who had called and Anita was aghast. It was not turning out as she had planned, not at all.

"What shall I do?" she cried. "I cannot go down, and meet him before Aunt Manning, no, I cannot. You go, mother, and I will stay up here. I shall wait till I can see him alone; I shall have to do that."

So Mrs. Beltrán went down alone to find Aunt Manning fiercely demanding why the young man had not brought his bag. "But I am supposed to be staying at The Beeches," he argued.

"Nothing of the kind, nothing of the kind," retorted Aunt Manning. They have a houseful as it is and we haven't a single Christmas guest. Ernest Kirkby had to monopolize my nephew, Joseph, and

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cheated us out of his visit, and here you are backing out."

"But, my dear Mrs. Manning," replied the young man, "I didn't understand that you expected me to take up my headquarters here."

"Then the sooner you understand the better. Is anything the matter with this house that everyone wants to shun it?"

"My dear Mrs. Manning——" The young man tried to conciliate her. He had heard enough of her bristling manner from others not to be able to set a true value upon its unimportance.

Just here, however, Mrs. Beltrán appeared and Mrs. Manning went off to the telephone, to "have it out," as she expressed it, with Mrs. Teaness. In a few minutes she came back quite mollified. "It is quite right," she announced. "She understands. I will send Timpkins over for your bag and you will stay just where you are."

This, however, Terrence would not listen to, as he declared he must make his excuses in person and went off in spite of protests, promising to return in the afternoon.

Therefore, although the edge of her expectations was taken off a trifle, Anita was able to adhere to her decision of seeing her true love alone. Lillian managed to follow out her scheme of getting her grandmother into the greenhouse at the critical moment,

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and Anita, arrayed in the blue frock of precious memory, went down with beating heart into the drawing room where Tibbie had ushered the guest.

He was standing in front of the grate fire, his head thoughtfully bent when Anita reached the doorway. She stood a moment upon the threshold, her heart beating so furiously that she could not trust herself to speak. He was there, the same familiar form, the same beloved features. He looked older, paler, more thoughtful and grave. She dropped the curtain behind her and made a step forward. He looked up. An expression of wonder came over his face. He passed his hand over his eyes as if trying to brush away some illusion. Anita advanced a step or two but felt powerless to utter a word. Terrence looked at her fixedly from the crown of her dark head to her slippered feet. "Nancy," he breathed. "The same eyes, the same mouth, even the same blue dress. My Nancy. The Nancy that was once mine."

Anita moved swiftly forward holding out both hands and finding speech at last. "Terrence, Terrence," she cried, joyously. "It is your Nancy still; always your Nancy during all this time. Oh, Terrence, I was so silly ever to let you go."

He held her close, and, when Aunt Manning's voice broke in upon them, as she suddenly appeared with Lillian, they still stood with clasped hands.

Aunt Manning viewed them for a moment with

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severe disapproval, then she said, "Young man, why are you holding my niece's hand?"

"He had a right to hold my hand long before you ever saw me, Aunt Manning," retorted Anita, who, having come to her own, was ready with some of her old spirit.

"What's this? What's this?" queried Aunt Manning.

"I'll have to explain. There will be no use in trying to put it off," said Anita, with an adorable look at her lover. "You talk to Lillian."

But as Mrs. Beltrán appeared upon the scene Lillian thought best to follow her grandmother and Anita into the sitting-room. "I tried my best to keep her longer," she whispered to Anita, as they passed out, "but that old Tibbie had to come and let the cat out of the bag."

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CHAPTER XXI

FAREWELL

SAID Aunt Manning: "I knew when I heard him call her Nancy that he must have more common sense than most." As usual she had begun by bristling up most aggressively but became as mild as milk when she understood the situation, and was delighted with the romance. "You see I knew what was best," she said, triumphantly, to Terrence after she had made him a congratulatory speech. "As if I would permit the man engaged to my niece to spend his Christmas anywhere but here." The rest exchange amused looks, but Aunt Manning was perfectly satisfied that the arrangement was entirely due to her having taken the initiative.

Said Tibbie, "'E's an unaccountable nice young man, but if he bides in this house eternally, mistus, you and me parts company."

"Rogues! Rogues!" cried Mr. Kirkby, when he was let into the secret. "I'll have my revenge on you yet for keeping me in the dark."

Said Pepé, "I am to be given a brother as well as a sister, it seems. Another riches. And you go to America? This pleases me. I am wishing to go. I promise Mr. Abercrombie that I follow him if I can. He will still be my good friend and has for me opportunities. I have tell him that I can decide nothing till

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I know the desires of my mother and sister, for where they live, I say, I also. Now we go, and I say Hola! After Spain, America, the United States."

"Oh, but not soon, you will not go soon," cried Aunt Manning, ready to combat the idea.

"By the first of the year the doctors have ordered me to be sunning myself in Spain," Terrence told her. "I am out of the running, can do no more active service, though they tell me I shall be all right in spite of the knock-out I have had. A winter in Spain, and then back to the States."

"I don't see," continued Aunt Manning, "why you and Joseph cannot go together and come back in the spring. Meanwhile Nancy and her mother can stay with me, and Nancy can be making preparations for that wedding which I suppose you are not going to put off very long. You can be married here in our little church and Mr. Kirkby will have a chance to get that revenge he was speaking of a while ago."

"Good! Good!" cried the rector.

"You'd better come with us to Spain," proposed Anita, rather confused. "You and Lillian come."

"I'm too old for that sort of thing," Aunt Manning answered, shaking her head. "Spain may be a better place than I believed. It certainly has brought me some good, and if I had to leave England to go anywhere, I'd as soon it would be there as any other place, but I'm too old to be transplanted. As for Lillian——"

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"As for Lillian," spoke up that young person, "she sticks by her granny and old England, doesn't she Tommy?" She took her dog's head between her hands. "Hims has 'a stay, too, an' 'fend he mistus an' he country," she said. This remark brought from Tommy three sudden and startling barks. "He say he can't 'sert 'cause he British sojer," explained Lillian.

Aunt Manning turned to her niece. "At all events you two may as well make up your minds to stay till spring. You can be as quiet as you like, and Nancy will be wanting to take several months for her preparations."

Mrs. Beltrán looked troubled. "Dear Auntie," she said, "these are war times and one does not know what may happen. I am afraid I cannot face another separation from my son, and I think I can speak for Anita when I say that it would be as hard for her."

Aunt Manning started to speak but checked herself and was silent a moment before she agreed: "Well, I suppose I must give in. I wish I did not have to confess that you are right."

Timpkins, coming in the gate with a budget of Christmas mail, interrupted the conference. Aunt Manning, followed by Lillian, bustled out to get her share, and Mr. Kirkby went with them.

The arrival of the mail from the States was always an event, but at this Christmas season it meant more

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hous but thos peple dat is buy it is take percesion in the spring, and Lawd knows whar we goes. Iry sens his respecks and I sens my luv an a merry crismuss. We knows you dosent fergit us.

from yore luvin ole mammy.

P. S. plese excus bad spellin an ritin."

"What a very curious letter," remarked Pepé, with a puzzled look, as Anita folded it up.

"It is a dear letter," responded Anita. "It takes me right back. I know exactly who wrote it for Mammy; it was that little yellow Cely, mother, the one who lives at the Lippitt's. She generally writes Parthy's letters for her, and I have come to know her style. You will find a number of things that will seem curious to you, Pepé, when we get home. I am glad that we are all going to be Americans. You will get back your citizenship in time, won't you, Terry?"

"In time I shall, and you will be an American, too, Nancy, for a woman is what her husband is."

"I'd marry you for that if for nothing else," said Anita saucily. "My first conscious belief in my nationality was that I was an American and I have never given up my feeling of loyalty. I love Spain and I love old England, but when I get back I shall salute Old Glory and sing 'My Country, 'tis of Thee.'"

"About that going back, and about our leaving here," said Terrence. "We shall all be going to Spain

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and why should we not go as one famliy? Dear Mrs. Beltrán, come over to my side, you and Pepé, and say that you approve of our being married before we leave."

"Oh, but so soon, so soon," faltered Anita.

"Have we not waited long enough?" pleaded Terrence. "Wouldn't you rather be married here in the midst of your relatives and friends with dear Mr. Kirkby to marry us than to wait till we are in a strange country among foreigners?"

"But Spain isn't a strange country and our friends there are dears," persisted Anita.

Terrence looked disappointed and turned to Mrs. Beltrán inquiringly. "Please help me," he said.

"When you implore me in such a feeling manner," she said, "I shall have to listen. I'm sure your plan would please Aunt Manning immensely. She will think you adopt it because she first proposed it. She loves to have one bow to her decrees, although I suppose she will be shocked at what might appear to be unseemly haste."

"Unseemly haste? Why, my dear lady, it has been more than two years," Terrence exclaimed.

"Very well, if you choose to put it that way to her, perhaps that point can be overlooked."

"But clothes, clothes," Anita urged her plea.

"Oh, clothes!" Terrence set this suggestion scornfully aside. "This is war time, and anyway no one

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should bother about clothes. What about that pretty blue dress?"

"This? Oh, it is as old as the hills."

"I don't think the question of clothes need be an insuperable objection," acknowledged Mrs. Beltrán. "What we cannot supply here we can find in Barcelona."

"Bless you for saying that," cried Terrence. "That matter settled what is in the way?"

"Nothing but Aunt Manning," Mrs. Beltrán was obliged to admit.

"Then thrice blessed lady, won't you please interview her as soon as possible? There she is now, coming out of the greenhouse."

Mrs. Beltrán agreed and with Pepé left the room. In a few moments they heard voices in eager argument in the next room.

"You are all taking a mean advantage of me," pouted Anita, left alone with her lover.

"It is my revenge for your deceiving me so absolutely that day at The Beeches. How could you do it, Nancy, after I had confessed that you were still so dear to me?"

"I don't know exactly. I suppose I was jes' natchelly mean, as Parthy would say. You do forgive me, though, don't you, for that and all the other things? All that unhappiness which sent you to Europe you might have avoided but for bad me."

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"Dearest girl, so were you equally unhappy, and you have even more to forgive. I was a blundering idiot not to have gone back to you at once. I, who should have been near you at a time when you needed all the help and love possible, left you to bear your sorrows all alone. I cannot forget that."

"My own true mother has shown me how good often comes out of evil," said Anita, gravely. "Perhaps I should never have found her nor Pepé if you had been with me, and maybe, Terrence, we are both better for what we have suffered. I hope I am."

"You are dearer than ever, dearer than ever," he replied, brokenly. Then appeared the conspirators with Aunt Manning heading them. "I am glad you are sensible enough to take my view of things," she announced herself by saying. "Of course it would be perfectly ridiculous for you to be married anywhere else but here, since it appears that you must go to Spain, though I must say I don't agree with any of you about it's being absolutely necessary. If you are all so willfully set upon it we shall have the marriage take place on New Year's Eve. Joseph can give you away, Nancy, and Lillian will be your bridesmaid. We can wire up to London and have you a proper frock sent down."

"And hims will throw hims old shoe after you," asserted Lillian.

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With matters taken out of her hands in this summary manner there was nothing for Anita to do but to acquiesce, and Terrence, in his pleasure at having things arranged to his liking, insisted upon kissing Aunt Manning then and there. "It's lucky Tibbie didn't see me," she exclaimed, half hysterically, "or she would have given notice."

The Christmas party at The Beeches was a great success. The announcement of the suddenly arranged marriage, with the departure immediately following, centered all the interest in Anita and her affairs, but, a few days after, even this great interest sank into insignificance on account of sorrowful news from the trenches. Harry Warren would never again walk in Sussex ways with any of them. He was killed by an enemy's shell a few days after Christmas. A note to poor Eleanor, in response to hers, the last, perhaps, that he ever wrote, was all she had to comfort her, such slight comfort as it was. There was something very pathetic in her silent grief, grief for one to whom she had given love unsought, and Lillian, more than anyone else, gave her an unspoken sympathy. Bertie, shocked and distressed by this loss of his chum, wrote at length to Lillian and she, knowing what his letter would mean to Eleanor, poor Elly Fantine, gave it into her keeping.

The quiet little wedding was even quieter because

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of this shadow which was thrown across the little group. No one was present except those most interested. Aunt Manning bore herself bravely, held her head high when going into church, but looked a drooping and lonely figure when she came out. Much had come into her life in these past few months; much was going out of it now. So few were left and these had twined themselves very closely around her heart. "You will come back; you must come," she whispered brokenly as she clung to Mrs. Beltrán.

"When the war is over," promised her niece.

"I am an old woman, an old woman, Katharine, I may not see the end of this war. Come back before you leave this side of the world," she begged.

Mrs. Beltrán was spared an answer for others came up. Haddie and Tommy danced around excitedly, brave in white bows of ribbon tied on their collars. Hotspur, disdaining all this intrusion into his domain, hied himself to the kitchen where he remained till the wedding party was well out of the way. Lillian insisted that even Signor Verdi should become one of the party and tethered him to a plant in one of the windows, a proceeding which came near to proving disastrous to the poor Signor, for he was forgotten till Lillian came back from Southampton and might not have survived the experience if the room had not been warm.

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To Southampton went both Lillian and Mr. Kirkby to see the travellers well on their way to Spain. Tommy Atkins, too, must go along, and the last view of the three, as the steamer pulled out, showed Mr. Kirkby waving farewell with one handkerchief and mopping his eyes with another, while Lillian, hiding her wet eyes behind Tommy's docile form, held his paw so that he appeared to wave his little Union Jack till it became but a tiny speck of color.

"England, dear England," murmured Mrs. Beltrán, trying to keep back the tears, "when shall we see it again?" Ah, when? Who could tell?

Anita, too, with tearful eyes, watched the receding shores. "Dear land, dear land," she said, "you have brought me more than any other place. You gave me my mother, my brother, my own true love."

Terrence smiled down at her. "I, too, owe it a debt, for it gave you back to me."

The little steamer plowed its way out into the wide sea, and England was but a faint line upon the horizon. Ahead of them lay Spain where, too, warm hearts awaited them, where sunshine was and many days of quiet joy.

Leaning upon the rail, Anita looked down at the rushing waters. "I shall like going back," she said, musingly, her thoughts wandering far afield.

"To England?" asked Terrence.

"No, back home, to our own home. I shall like

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to see Parthy and Ira, Mr. Weed, dear man, and all of them. I'd love to walk in the old garden. I wonder if I may. Do you remember the old garden, Terrence?"

His hand closed over hers. "Do I remember it, sweetheart? I can never forget it."

"And that walk? Do you remember that walk home from church? I was so happy, so happy and young that night, that Christmas Eve."

The last sunset of the old year touched them with its brightness, land, sky, and sea were ablaze with glory, but they saw nothing except the lovelight in each other's eyes.

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